THE LIFE OF CHUCK

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Based on the short story by
Stephen King

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Intrepid Pictures

ACT THREE:

Thanks, Chuck

1 INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON 1

A bulletin board, covered with small posters and fliers from various AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS. A sign-up sheet for the **MATH LEAGUE**, and a flier for **TWIRLERS AND SPINNERS**, a dance club.

RAM
"The past and present wilt; I have filled them, emptied them, and proceed to fill my next fold of the future."

A high school classroom, oddly only half-full - WHERE IS EVERYONE? Up front, a student (RAM, 16) reads from a tablet. Behind them, the words "Walt Whitman" are on the blackboard.

RAM (CONT'D)
"Listener up there! What have you to confide to me? Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening. Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer."

Close on the teacher, MARTY ANDERSON (40s), barely listening. He's looking out the window, watching as EMERGENCY VEHICLES race by in the distance, headed to some unknown catastrophe.

RAM (CONT'D)
"Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself. *I am large, I contain multitudes.*"

Marty becomes aware of several students REACTING in the classroom. A few have PHONES in their hands, showing each other the screens. Alarmed expressions on their young faces.

MARTY
What is it?

The students quickly TUCK THEIR PHONES out of sight.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Clearly something more interesting than Whitman, what is it.

STUDENT 2
(holding out the phone)
California. There was another earthquake.
(beat)
A big chunk's gone, Santa Barbara to Fresno.

Marty CATCHES HIS BREATH. STILLNESS settles on the classroom as this SINKS IN.

Finally, Marty picks up his cell phone. Opens CNN.

STUDENT 3
That's fucking crazy -

STUDENT 2
Into the ocean. Just like that.

MARTY
Alright, alright, settle down. I've got no connection, anybody else have one?

THE ENTIRE CLASS lift their phones from their laps. No one's been listening, they've been on their phones the whole time.

WHOLE CLASS
(variations, overlapping)
Nope, no, mine's gone -

STUDENT 2
Connection's gone, Mr. Anderson -

MURMURS of rising alarm from the students.

MARTY
Okay, it'll come back, it always comes back. *Phones away,* for real this time. Please, continue.

The students start to settle. At the head of the class, the nervous student resumes reading.

RAM
"I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab. Who has done his day's work? Who will soonest be through with his supper? Who wishes to walk with me?"

Even Marty can't quite concentrate on the poem. He's looking at his phone. At the NO CONNECTION prompt.

He hits REFRESH. Again. And AGAIN. And AGAIN. Out the window, two more EMERGENCY VEHICLES race by.

RAM (CONT'D)
"Will you speak before I am gone? Will you prove already too late?"

CUT TO:

2 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER 2

Marty sits across from two PARENTS. He glances at his computer, checking the WIFI signal again. NO CONNECTION.

MARTY
Sorry, the network's still down - I've got his file here though.

He pulls out a HARD COPY of a STUDENT FILE, opening it up.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Dylan's been diving lately. This semester he's down from A's and B's to D's -

DYLAN'S DAD
You keep hard copies?

MARTY
Yeah, last few months - when the network started acting up, lot of us started keeping hard copies -

DYLAN'S DAD
You think it's coming back?

MARTY
I don't know.

DYLAN'S MOM
Suppose we'll figure out how to get by without it, I mean we got by without it before, for - well forever, didn't we.

MARTY
If Dylan needs extra help, I can offer some tutoring -

DYLAN'S MOM
I mean I remember the world before the internet. Why's it so hard to imagine carrying on without it? It is though, isn't it. How do we go back? I mean *can* we go back? What if it's down for good this time?

MARTY
I'm an English teacher, not an IT guy. But I can talk confidently about Dylan's grades...

3 A NEW SET OF PARENTS across from him now. 3

HECTOR
(checking phone)
Internet's still down.

MARTY
I know, but lucky for us I've got hard copies for each student -

BRENT
I think this might be it, I don't think it's coming back this time.

MARTY
You may be right. I do think we should talk about Emily, her attendance has really fallen off -

HECTOR
Her attendance? How many teachers are MIA? Right now? Today I mean?

MARTY
(beat)
Seven.

HECTOR
Yeah, that's what I thought. And how many people didn't show for a goddamned Brent/teacher conference? Absenteeism's at an all time high, all over the world, doctors and pilots and cops and everybody just pissing off, and you wanna talk to me about *Emily?*

MARTY
I can't speak to the rest of the world. But for now, anyway, Emily's still my job.

4 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER 4

JOSH (late 30s) sits across from him now.

JOSH
How are they supposed to study anyway? Web's been on the fritz eight months, half those sites are just garbled. I mean I get it, sites go dark, but what about the other stuff?
(MORE)

JOSH (CONT'D)
Sites're still there but all the punctuation's wrong, words spelled wrong. How do you explain that?

MARTY
I can't. But Brian can still prepare for class. The library's still here, internet or not -

JOSH
Pornhub's down, you know that, Mr. Anderson?

MARTY
(has to smile)
Yeah, I did notice that. And call me Marty, first-name's fine, I mean if we're talking porn -

JOSH
Library's not gonna be much help in that department, is it.

MARTY
No, I guess not.

JOSH
Sorry if Bri's being any trouble, it's just me now - his mom, she left, don't know where - that's happening a lot more, I hear, people just ghosting. Hers was some star-crossed boyfriend from High School, dated a month - a goddamned month - so she's gonna throw twenty years in the trash to chase down a month. Guess she never stopped thinking about him. Guess we all got someone like that, and I get it, if it's the end, like those kooks in the purple robes say, who you wanna be with it, but to leave her son - I don't know. Says she'll be back. I don't know.
(beat)
Pornhub, man. What if *that* never comes back? Fucking tragedy. I mean even if it's the end of all things, that's just fucking *mean*.

Marty can't help it. He starts laughing. They laugh together.

CUT TO:

5 INT. MARTY'S CAR - LATER THAT EVENING 5

Marty sits in BUMPER TO BUMPER traffic in the city. NOBODY MOVING. He looks up ahead, and can see why - THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS ARE ALL FLASHING YELLOW.

NARRATOR
The day Marty Anderson first saw the billboard was just before the Internet finally went down for good. It had been wobbling for eight months, but other problems - like fires, earthquakes, and whole species of birds and fish dying off - had taken priority.

RADIO
- the Ohio fire has grown. Estimates have it at 3.5 million acres burned, which would mean it has surpassed the Great Fire of 1910, until today, thought to be the largest wildfire in United States history -

He CHANGES the station to some music. **"Gimme Some Lovin'" by Steve Winwood.** Much better.

A SMALL OPENING in traffic, and he tries to SQUEEZE his car into the gap. Only a few feet forward, though, and little other progress. He sighs.

NARRATOR
Ordinarily, Marty would have driven home by way of the turnpike bypass, but that wasn't possible due to the collapse of the bridge over Otter Creek.

Drumming his hands to the music, he looks out his side window - and something catches his eye.

A BILLBOARD. On top of the MIDWEST TRUST bank building.

It's a photograph of an UTTERLY UNREMARKABLE MAN, maybe 40. Wearing black framed glasses, sitting at a desk with a pen in his hand, jacket-less but with his tie carefully knotted at the collar of his white shirt.

On his left hand, holding the pen, there is a **CRESCENT-SHAPED SCAR.** He's wearing a pleasant smile, and he kind of looks like an accountant, or some other professional desk-jockey.

Above his head, in blue, are the words **CHARLES KRANTZ.**

Below him: **39 GREAT YEARS! THANKS CHUCK**

Marty stares at the billboard. It looks brand new, and he obviously hasn't seen it before.

Traffic inches along. He moves a car length, settles, and looks back at the billboard. At the ordinary, unremarkable, smiling face of Charles Krantz.

MARTY
Well congrats on your retirement, whoever the fuck you are. Getting out in the nick of time, my man.

CUT TO:

6 OMITTED 6

7 INT. HOSPITAL, DOCTOR'S LOUNGE - LATER 7

FELICIA (30s) sits in the lounge, head in her hands, listening to NPR.

NPR PERSONALITY 1
- officially makes Nevada one of the most populous states in the union. We got reports that gas in Nevada is $20 a gallon, cash only.

NPR PERSONALITY 2
The thing that must be said is Nevada does not have the infrastructure for that kind of population increase -

NARRATOR
Felicia Gordon is a nurse at City General, though for the last few weeks, she's felt more like an undertaker. The staff, whose numbers have been dwindling since late summer, have begun referring to themselves as "The Suicide Squad".

NPR ANNOUNCER 1
You're talking about water -

NPR PERSONALITY 2
Yeah, I'm talking about water. Though maybe with, and I feel bad saying this, maybe with California - there might be more to allocate, there should be, anyway, right?

NPR ANNOUNCER 1
We'll be right back to talk about this and about the fires in the mid-west, speaking of water scarcity. Back after this break.

A COMMERCIAL begins. Soft, nondescript music plays for a few seconds, and then a soothing voice kicks in:

COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER
We'd like to say thank you to Charles Krantz for 39 great years. Thank you, Chuck!

Felicia looks up at the radio, bemused. That was weird -

BRI
Hey! I heard you got another one.

Felicia turns to Bri in the doorway.

FELICIA
Yeah, one more.

BRI
That's something anyway. Mine wasn't so lucky. Slit wrists, so what were we really supposed to do, right? Did you hear about Marilou?

FELICIA
No, what about Marilou.

BRI
She left! Her ex, remember Pedro? Well he showed up and I don't know what he said to her but she walked right out, holding his hand. And I remember how bad that divorce was - they fought so hard, you remember?

FELICIA
I remember.

BRI
Well I guess that's all bridge water, off she went.
(MORE)

BRI (CONT'D)
Made me think about calling up Megan, but she's - I don't know. I think she and Tyson are happy so... you ever think about calling Marty?

FELICIA
I don't know.

BRI
Wonder what the stats are. You think more people are splitting up, or getting back together? I mean you think marriage rates are up or divorce rates are up?

FELICIA
Marriage.

BRI
You're an optimist.

FELICIA
No, just divorce takes WAY longer and I don't think anyone's filing. Why bother. Six months of paperwork, at least, probably more, marriage license is one page. Takes an hour. So I'm guessing marriages.
(long beat)
So how many today? Total?

BRI
Counting yours, eighteen. Eighteen against six. Not bad. 'Night, Felicia. I'll see you tomorrow. You're coming tomorrow, right?

FELICIA
Yeah, I'm coming tomorrow.

BRI
Okay. 'Night.

She walks away. Felicia watches the door close. Sighs. Turns back to the radio, where another commercial plays.

CUT TO:

8 INT. FELICIA'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT 8

Felicia sits at her counter, in front of a MICROWAVED DINNER made for one. A bottle of wine open in front of her. She chews the food, sighing. Looking down at her PHONE.

She picks it up. Scrolls. Finds the number she wants: MARTY. She hesitates. And then, finally, DIALS.

9 INT. MARTY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - INTERCUT 9

Marty sits on the couch, eating reheated pizza. He looks down as his PHONE RINGS. He FREEZES as he sees the name - FELICIA.

He isn't sure what to do. He reaches for the phone, about to pick it up when THE CALL ABRUPTLY ENDS. He stares.

IT RINGS AGAIN. FELICIA once more. He PICKS IT UP.

MARTY
... hi.

At her counter, Felicia catches her breath.

FELICIA
Hi.

MARTY
You hung up -

FELICIA
Yeah but then I figured you probably saw it so - how are you.

MARTY
I'm okay. I guess. How are you?

FELICIA
I was thinking about you today. We were at work, talking about marriages and divorces, like - which are happening more, now, and I don't know. I thought I'd call.

MARTY
Marriages, I bet. Ain't nobody waiting on a divorce.

FELICIA
What about re-marriages!

MARTY
Whoa, buy a guy a drink first.

FELICIA
I bet those're happening, I mean, it makes sense, people wanting something comforting. Familiar.
(MORE)

FELICIA (CONT'D)
(beat)
So... how was your day?

MARTY
(laughs)
Wow, just going right for it, aren't you -

FELICIA
Humor me.

He smiles. Stands from the couch, starts walking through the living room. Toward the stairs.

MARTY
It was a day. Weird. Parent/teacher sessions, felt like pissing in the wind.

10 INT. MARTY'S HOUSE, STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS 10

Marty heads upstairs, shifting the phone to his other ear.

FELICIA
How many actually showed up?

MARTY
More than I expected, far less than a full house. Mostly they wanted to talk about the internet. Which... I don't know, I feel like it might really be gone for good this time. You have any internet?

FELICIA
Nope, not since this afternoon. You know about California, right?

MARTY
Yeah.

FELICIA
I know they're saying most of it was already evacuated, but I heard today there are hundreds of thousands of refugees trekking East. Did you know Nevada's one of the most populous states in the union now? I heard a scientist on NPR say California's peeling away like old wallpaper.
(MORE)

FELICIA (CONT'D)
And another Japanese reactor got inundated this afternoon, they're saying it was shut down, all's well, but I don't think I believe that.

MARTY
Cynic.

11 INT. MARTY'S HOUSE, NARROW STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS 11

Marty reaches ANOTHER STAIRCASE. This one is ODDLY DIFFERENT from the other, doesn't seem to fit in the house.

FELICIA
Well we're living in cynical times, Marty. I mean some people think we're living in the Last Times.

It's very NARROW, its wooden stairs lit by a **SINGLE HANGING BULB** on a black cord. Heading up to some other room, an ATTIC perhaps... currently hidden behind a WOODEN DOOR. WITH A PADLOCK. Marty STARES UP AT IT as Felicia talks.

FELICIA (CONT'D)
Not just the religious crazies, either, not anymore, and you're hearing that from a member in good standing of the City General Suicide Squad. That's what we call ourselves now, no lie! We lost six today, but there's eighteen more we dragged back, mostly with Naloxone, but supplies of that are getting very thin. And I heard the head pharmacist say we might be completely out by the end of the month.

MARTY
That sucks.

FELICIA
Yeah, it sucks. It really sucks.

A long pause between them. Marty's eyes fixed on the **YALE PADLOCK** at the door... something about it making us feel UNEASY... we don't know it yet, but this door will be VERY IMPORTANT LATER.

CUT TO:

12 INT. MARTY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER 12

Marty turns the corner, heading into the kitchen. Listening to Felicia's voice, but wandering a little aimlessly.

FELICIA
I don't know. The internet's down, California's hanging by a thread, there's fires and famines and plagues and all the rest - I mean it just feels like the misery is endless. The center doesn't hold. It just won't let up. How long is this gonna go on? How much can we take? Before the whole thing goes apart, I mean?

Marty looks up at the WALL CLOCK. It's 11:58 PM.

Marty looks up at the WALL CALENDAR. Wherever we are in the world, it's APRIL.

MARTY
I'm teaching the kids Carl Sagan right now, you ever hear what he said about the Cosmic Calendar?

FELICIA
I don't know. Don't think so.

MARTY
So the universe is 15 billion years old. If we took all of that, all 15 billion years, and compress them to a single calendar year...

He reaches up, flipping the calendar back to JANUARY 1st.

MARTY (CONT'D)
The Big Bang happened on the first second of January 1st. And today, *right now*, we're in the final mili-second of the last minute of the last day, December 31st. But back to the start - if the Big Bang happened at midnight on January 1st... that means each month of this calendar is one and a quarter billion years long.

FELICIA
Hey nobody told me there was math on this exam.

Marty smiles as he FLIPS THE PAGES. February. March. April.

MARTY
Universe started January 1st, but the Milky Way didn't form until *May*. And our sun and our Earth didn't show up until mid-*September*. Life appears soon after, but not us - no, we don't appear for - guess how long.

FELICIA
Again, I was told there'd be no math.

MARTY
If every month is one and a quarter billion years long, then each day is forty million years, each second is 500 years and that means... if the calendar was the size of a football field, all of human history would be the size of my hand.

He finishes flipping pages. He's landed on DECEMBER. He looks up at the WALL CLOCK above him. It's 11:59 PM.

MARTY (CONT'D)
So it's December 31st. Last day on the calendar. And the very first human beings on Earth made their debut around... *10:30 pm*. 10:30 pm on December 31st. And every minute since then is 30,000 years long. So at 11:46 pm - only 14 minutes ago - humanity tamed fire. Now we're out of minutes, we're into seconds.

He watches as the SECOND HAND ticks away on the clock.

MARTY (CONT'D)
11:59:20: the domestication of plants and animals began; an application for the human talent for making tools. 11:59:35: agricultural communities evolved into the first cities. Our *recorded* history - everyone we've ever heard of - every single thing in any of our history books - happens in the last *ten seconds*.
(MORE)

MARTY (CONT'D)
The last ten seconds, of the last minute of the last day on the calendar... December 31st.

He watches the second hand TICK past 11:59:50, heading to MIDNIGHT. And then he watches as... it PASSES MIDNIGHT.

MARTY (CONT'D)
So, how long is it gonna go on? I dunno, Fel. If you're right, and you might be, if this really is the Last Times - if the Universe is dying, and let's say it's a fast death - even if all of this is happening in just the last split second, a micro-second, a final hiccup as the Universe taps out - hell, who knows how long that'll last. Maybe seconds; maybe aeons. Maybe all of this is happening as the cosmos burps out its last breath, maybe it's all happening in the last single solitary heartbeat.

FELICIA
(beat)
Jesus, Marty. Always thought Astronomy was supposed to be comforting.

MARTY
It's not the astronomy that scares me, it's the fucking *math*. But I don't know. There's some comfort in that too, I guess.

FELICIA
Well. What can I say. That sucks.

MARTY
Yeah, it sucks.
(beat)
Listen, Fel, I should go, I've got tests to grade.

FELICIA
Alright.

They wait. Neither wants to hang up. Marty heads to the counter, staring at several BOTTLES OF BOURBON.

FELICIA (CONT'D)
Marty?

MARTY
What, hon.

FELICIA
The world is going down the drain, and all we can say is ‘that sucks.’ So maybe we’re going down the drain too.

MARTY
Maybe we are.
(beat)
But Chuck Krantz is retiring, so I guess there’s a gleam of light in the darkness.

FELICIA
(laughs)
Thirty-nine great years!

MARTY
You saw that weird billboard?

FELICIA
No, it was an ad on the radio! That NPR show I was telling you about!

MARTY
If they’re running ads on NPR, it really is the end of the world. Tell me, how does Chuck Krantz rate this kind of coverage? He looks like an accountant, and I never heard of him. Used an old photo too, I guess, I mean the guy barely looks 40 *at all*, let alone 40 years on the job.

FELICIA
The world is full of mysteries. And hey... no hard stuff, Marty. Have a beer instead.

His smile fades. His hand is ON THE BOTTLE OF BOURBON.

MARTY
Yeah. You got it. Goodnight.

FELICIA
‘night.

They hang up. Marty looks at the bottle for a long time.

CUT TO:

13 INT. MARTY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER 13

Marty POURS another Bourbon. Picks up the remote, turns on the TV to the NEWS, which shows aerial footage of a MASSIVE WILDFIRE -

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
- the Ohio EPA has now issued a code red air quality alert for Cleveland and its surrounding -

He quickly CHANGES THE CHANNEL. Landing on an old movie:

***COVER GIRL*, with Gene Kelly and Rita Hayworth.**

He settles back. Watching Gene and Rita dancing like angels as he sips his drink. Nearby, we see a FRAMED PHOTO of FELICIA. Candid, smiling at the camera.

Marty is startled as the MOVIE VANISHES from the screen, replaced with the TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES TEST TONE.

He stares at it. Hits the remote, changing channels. SAME. SAME. Various TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES.

MARTY
'kay then.

He hits a button, and the SMART APPS appear on the screen. He launches NETFLIX.NO CONNECTION. Launches AMAZON PRIME.

The menu loads, he scrolls through - and then the screen gives way to CONNECTION ERROR.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Shit on a stick -

As he watches, the connection screen FLASHES WITH SOMETHING ELSE. That same picture of Chuck Krantz, sitting at his desk. Smiling. The same words:

CHARLES KRANTZ. 39 GREAT YEARS! THANKS, CHUCK

Marty STARES at it for several long seconds.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Who the fuck are you, Chuckie?

And then, the picture FLICKERS AWAY, back to CONNECTION ERROR. Marty DOWNS THE REST OF HIS DRINK.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. MARTY'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING 14

Marty steps out the front door, squinting into the blue sky. The day seems normal enough. He walks toward his car, rubbing his temples. He looks hung over.

He DROPS his keys, fumbling for them. Looks up, stretching and breathing deep. And notices -

A man, walking toward him. It's GUS WILFONG (late 40s), wearing khakis and a PUBLIC WORKS shirt with a tie. Carrying a large lunchbox. Heading toward the HOUSE BESIDE MARTY'S.

MARTY
Gus!

GUS
Oh hey Marty...

MARTY
Where's your car?

GUS
Sidewalk halfway down Main Street Hill, with a hundred others. I just had to turn around, fuck it. Can't remember the last time I walked three miles. If you're going to school, buddy, you'll hafta go all the way out Route 11 and hook back on 19. Twenty miles at least, and there'll be plenty of traffic. Might get there before lunch, but I wouldn't count on it.

Marty realizes there are OTHERS WALKING THIS WAY TOO. Carrying their briefcases, some carrying their shoes.

MARTY
What happened?

GUS
Sinkhole opened up at Main and Market. Man, it's huge. All the rain mighta had something to do with it, lack of maintenance even more - not my department, thank God. Gotta be twenty cars at the bottom, and some of the people in those cars ain't coming back.

MARTY
Jesus! I was just there last night, backed up in traffic.

GUS
Be glad you weren't there this morning. Mind if I sit a minute? I'm pooped, and Jenny will have gone to bed. I don't want to wake her up with bad news.

Gus SITS on the back of Marty's car. Marty sits beside him.

GUS (CONT'D)
This is bad, my friend.

MARTY
Taking the day off?

GUS
I don't know. Maybe I'll make some calls, see if someone can pick me up, but I'm not hopeful.

MARTY
Well if you do take the day, don't plan to spend it watching Netflix or YouTube. Internet's down again, maybe for good this time.

GUS
I'm assuming you know about California.

MARTY
I didn't turn on the TV this morning, is there something new?

GUS
Rest of it went. Well, they're saying twenty percent of Northern California is still hanging in, which means probably ten, but the food-producing regions are gone.

Marty takes this in. Watches the people shambling by.

GUS (CONT'D)
And with the Midwest turning to charcoal and Florida flooded, that's all the major food-producing regions in the country. All gone. Same with Europe. Already famine-time in Asia, millions dead there. Bubonic plague, I'm hearing.

Marty spots a WOMAN walking across the street. Dressed in a pink suit, wearing sneakers but carrying her HEELS in one hand, briefcase in the other.

GUS (CONT'D)
And the bees - they were in trouble a decade ago, but now they're completely gone, except a few hives in South America. No more honey, honey. And without them to pollinate whatever crops might be left -

MARTY
'Scuse me a sec.

He hops off the car.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Andrea? Are you Andrea? From Midwest Trust?

She turns warily, lifting her shoes as though she might hit him with them. He raises his hands, means no harm.

MARTY (CONT'D)
I'm Felicia Anderson's husband. Ex, actually, I think you and Fel know each other. We met at game night at David's, a few game nights.

ANDREA
Sure. What do you want? I've had a long walk and my car's stuck and the bank is... well it's *leaning*.

MARTY
Leaning?

ANDREA
It's on the edge of the sinkhole. Guess that's the end of my job.

MARTY
Hey I was curious about the billboard on the bank building, have you seen it?

ANDREA
How could I miss it? And I saw the ads on TV. Well, the local stations anyway. Maybe it's different on cable, we don't get that anymore. Not since July.

MARTY
Same, just channel 8 and 10.

ANDREA
No more ads for cars or Discount Furniture, just Charles Krantz, thirty nine great years, thanks Chuck.

MARTY
So he doesn't work for the bank? He's not retiring *from* the bank?

ANDREA
I don't know Charles Krantz, I think it's just a prank. Performance art. Banksy got bored. Take care.

She heads up the street. Marty watches her go, joining the others who can no longer get to their jobs. Dressed as BANKERS, WAITERS, DELIVERY PEOPLE...

GUS
They look like refugees.

MARTY
Yeah.

GUS
And no one looks that concerned.

MARTY
What good would that do?

GUS
We were all concerned at first, remember the protests in Washington? Remember when they knocked over the White House fence and those college kids got shot? The government overthrow in Russia and the Four Day War with India and Pakistan - there's a fucking *volcano* in Germany, for Christ's sake - *Germany!* We told each other this would blow over but it doesn't seem to be happening, does it.

MARTY
No.

GUS
I think the suicides will slow down. And people will just wait.

MARTY
For what.

GUS
For the end, pal. The end of everything. We've been going through the five stages of grief, don't you get it? Now we've arrived at the last one. Acceptance.
(beat)
It's the waiting, that's the hard part.

Marty doesn't answer. Just watches the people trudging up the road, shoes and bags in hand. Watches as someone DROPS a briefcase, leaving it behind as they head home.

GUS (CONT'D)
And it all came out of nowhere. I mean, we knew the environment was in trouble, I think even the right-wing nut jobs secretly believed in it - but this is sixty different varieties of shit, all at once. In how long? A year? Fourteen months?

MARTY
Yeah. Sucks.

Overhead, they hear the rumble of an AIRPLANE. They look up. It's a SMALL PLANE, bumbling along the clear sky and streaming white from its tail.

GUS
Huh. Skywriter. Haven't seen one since I was a kid.

They watch as the plane forms the first word. T... H... A...

GUS (CONT'D)
What the fuck.

MARTY
My sentiments exactly.

They stare as the plane keeps writing. Unsurprised to see:

"THANKS CHUCK!"

CUT TO:

15 INT. HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY 15

Felicia runs in, out of breath. Covered in sweat. Her friend tries to intercept her.

BRI
Where have you been -

FELICIA
Are you kidding, I had to run here! The traffic's insane and half the cars are empty -

BRI
Doctor Winston's MIA.

FELICIA
What?

BRI
He walked in this morning, and he looked around, and he walked out again. And now I can't find him. He dropped his pager on the way out -

FELICIA
I'll scrub in.

BRI
The beds are mostly empty.

Felicia turns toward him.

BRI (CONT'D)
Some of them walked out, I transferred two of the stable ones out... but Felicia, there's something weird.

Felicia can HEAR IT. A steady BEEPING SOUND, coming from the other side of the doors.

FELICIA
(beat)
What is that?

16 INT. HOSPITAL, EMERGENCY WARD HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 16

Felicia pushes through the doors. Heads past the EMPTY BEDS in the ER exam rooms. The BEEPING IS LOUDER -

She looks into one of the rooms. It's the HEARTBEAT MONITOR. But there is NO ONE HOOKED UP TO IT, NO ONE IN THE BED.

Bri approaches behind her.

FELICIA
What's wrong with the monitor?

BRI
That's the thing, it's not just that one.

Felicia looks at her, confused, but then realizes - she can hear the beeping from ACROSS THE HALL AS WELL. She heads toward that door. Looks inside.

Another heart monitor, BEEPING AWAY beside an EMPTY BED.

FELICIA
They're all doing it.

Felicia steps further into the hallway. Looking into the rooms as she goes. All the same -

HEART MONITORS BEEPING IN UNISON. OVER EMPTY BEDS.

BRI
I don't know, Fel. I don't know. I mean... I might wanna get out of here. I might wanna go home. I don't think I need to be here anymore.

CUT TO:

17 INT. MARTY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON 17

Marty FLIPS THROUGH the stations. All EMERGENCY BROADCAST SYSTEM now, with the occasional glimpse of **CHARLES KRANTZ: 39 GREAT YEARS. THANKS CHUCK!**

He TURNS IT OFF.

He picks up a picture of Felicia, in happier days. Stares at it.

DIALS his phone.

NETWORK ERROR. The phone isn't making phone calls.

18 EXT. MARTY'S HOUSE - EVENING 18

He steps outside, holding his phone out. Trying to find a signal. Nothing.

More and more people are out and about, some walking with bags, others abandoning their cars. Some wandering, holding up their phones.

Marty looks down at his phone... and finally DROPS it. no more need. He puts his hands in his pocket, and walks away. Leaves the phone on the ground behind him.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. STREET - EVENING 19

Marty walks along. The roads are jammed with cars, most abandoned. The traffic lights are OUT, just BLINKING RED now. Marty moves through the cars, crossing to the other side.

He spots an ELDERLY MAN sitting on the curb, KNOCKING HIS PIPE out into the gutter.

MARTY
You okay, sir?

He looks up at Marty, a little startled, but smiles.

ELDERLY MAN
Just taking a rest. I walked downtown to look at the sinkhole and take a few pictures with my phone. Thought one of the local TV stations might be interested, but they all seem to be off the air. Except for pictures of Krantz.

MARTY
Yep, all Chuck, all the time. Any idea who -

ELDERLY MAN
None. I've asked two dozen people, at least. Nobody knows. Our man Krantz is the Oz of the Apocalypse.

MARTY
Our last meme. Where are you heading?

ELDERLY MAN
Harvest Acres. Nice little enclave. Off the beaten track.

He reaches into his jacket, pulling out a pouch of tobacco, and starts reloading his pipe.

MARTY
I'm heading there myself. My ex lives there.
(beat)
I can walk with you, if you like.

The man considers this. Odd that it feels like a strange offer, but then again... these are odd times.

ELDERLY MAN
Why not, I guess. As long as you don't rush along. Arthritis. Got pills for it, but the more it sets in the less they do.

MARTY
You set the pace. I'm Marty Anderson.

ELDERLY MAN/SAM
Sam Yarborough. Nice to meet you.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. CITY STREET - EVENING 20

Felicia walks quickly, heading home. Around her, traffic is stuck, cars abandoned. People walking aimlessly, or running to get somewhere. Everyone lost in their own world.

She passes a wall, glancing up to see some fresh graffiti...

THANKS CHUCK! BUSKERS 4EVER

She stares at it, and keeps walking. Looking across the street, where she sees even more graffiti:

CHUCK LIVES

She slows. Really looking around now. Amid the posters, ads, and other graffiti of the city, there is more. Some brand new, some older, but all woven in -

I LOVE YOU CHUCK

CHUCK FOREVER

FOR CHUCK

She stares at it, bewildered, and picks up her pace.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. STREET - EVENING 21

Marty and the man walk along. Passing ABANDONED CARS and PEOPLE ON FOOT, heading in different directions. All various degrees of lost, various degrees of stoic.

MARTY
So I don't even know if any of my students showed up, I mean my phone didn't ring. If they noticed I wasn't there, nobody tried to do anything about it. So I guess I'm retired. I keep thinking about the stuff I didn't get to finish with them, you know. The stories they'll never read. The stuff they'll never know.
(beat)
What do you do, Sam? You still do anything, I mean?

SAM
Owner and chief undertaker, Yarborough Funeral Home.

MARTY
Oh man!

SAM
Yeah, we had a boom. Hard to feel good about it but business was never better than it was a few weeks ago. But my real interest's meteorology. Dreamed of being a television weatherman in my salad days, maybe even one of the networks, but nah. I keep up, though. Read the journals. And I can tell you something amazing, if you wanna hear...

They pass a BUS BENCH and STOP. Stenciled on the back is **CHARLES "CHUCK" KRANTZ 39 GREAT YEARS!**

They stare at it for a few beats. And then keep walking.

SAM (CONT'D)
You know how people say there's twenty-four hours in a day? Well they're wrong. There were twenty-three hours and fifty-six minutes in a stellar day. Plus a few odd seconds.

MARTY
"Were"?

SAM
Based on my calculations, which I assure you I can back up, my math is good - there are now *twenty-four hours and two minutes* in a day. Do you know what that means?

MARTY
You saying the Earth's rotation is slowing down.

SAM
Exactly.

Sam points at the dozens of people WANDERING the streets, heading about their business in the fading light.

SAM (CONT'D)
Lotta folks think all these disasters are 'cause of what we've done to the environment. Not so. I'm the first to admit, we treated our mother - yes, she's our mother, all of us - very badly, certainly molested her if not outright raped her, but we're puny compared to the great clock of the universe. No, whatever's happening is much larger than environmental degradation, the math says so.
(beat)
And math can do a lot of things, I mean math can be art... but it can't lie.

MARTY
Maybe it's Chuck Krantz's fault.

SAM
Back to him, eh? Chuck Krantz is retiring and the Earth's retiring with him? That your thesis?

MARTY
Gotta blame something. If it wasn't Big Business or Facebook or the GOP or Putin or Exxon or Monsanto - might as well be Chuck Krantz.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. HARVEST ACRES - SUNSET 22

They've made it to the neighborhood. A brick arch marks the entrance to HARVEST ACRES, a nice development. Sam SITS on a nearby bench.

SAM
Think I'll watch the sunset while I wait for the arthritis to settle a bit. Care to join me?

Marty smiles. Considers it, but...

MARTY
Think I'll go on.

SAM
The ex. I understand. Well.
(beat)
It was nice speaking with you, Mr. Anderson.

Marty heads under the arch. Halfway through, he turns back.

MARTY
Charles Krantz means something. I'm sure of it.

SAM
You could be right. But the slowing of the Earth's rotation - nothing's bigger than that, my friend. Remember - math can't lie.

Marty smiles and nods politely, and heads his way. Sam puffs his pipe, looking up at the sunset.

23 EXT. HARVEST ACRES, CENTRAL THOROUGHFARE - NIGHT 23

It's dark as Marty walks through the graceful tree-lined parabola. The streetlights have come on, casting a moonlight glow on the suburban scene.

As Marty approaches another street, a girl on roller skates (IRIS, 11) appears, banking gracefully around the corner. She STOPS as she sees him.

MARTY
Hey.

IRIS
Hey.

She stares at him, suspicious.

MARTY
Oh, don't worry, I'm - I'm going to see my ex-wife, Felicia Anderson. Or maybe she's back to Gordon now. She lives on Fern Lane. Number 19.

IRIS
Yeah, I know Ms. Gordon.

MARTY
What are you doing out?

IRIS
Wanted to go skating.

MARTY
I use to love skating.

IRIS
Then *you* should go skating.

MARTY
Yeah, maybe I should.

IRIS
Why do you see Ms. Gordon if she's your ex?

MARTY
Still like her.

IRIS
Do you fight?

MARTY
We used to. We get along better now that we're exes.

IRIS
Ms. Gordon gives us ginger snap cookies sometimes. Me and my little brother Ronnie. I like Oreos better but...

MARTY
That's the way the cookie crumbles, right?

IRIS
Ginger snaps don't crumble. At least not until you crunch them up in your -

THE STREETLIGHTS GO OUT. All of them, all at once.

THE HOUSES ARE DARK TOO. TOTAL POWER OUTAGE.

They stand in the dark, looking out at the neighborhood.

MARTY
You better go home, I guess. Too dark for skating without streetlights.

IRIS
(beat)
Mister? Is everything gonna be okay?

He looks down at her, doing his best to smile.

MARTY
Sure it is.

She isn't looking at him anymore. She's looking past him.

IRIS
But look.

She points. He turns. Toward a house on the corner of the lane. A FACE is appearing in the darkened by window. Made of softly glowing white lines and shadows, almost like a HOLOGRAM. Like ectoplasm at a séance.

THE FACE OF CHARLES KRANTZ. Same as the billboard. And above him, in softly glowing letters, **CHARLES KRANTZ.** Below him: **39 GREAT YEARS! THANKS, CHUCK!**

He stares at it. Impossible. Insane. The window glows its soft light, Charles Krantz smiles down at him.

The Iris pulls on his sleeve.

IRIS (CONT'D)
It's happening to all of them...

He looks up the road. Sure enough, in all of the dark windows, the same image is appearing, carved out of dim light, like a soft, sad hologram.

CHARLES KRANTZ. 39 GREAT YEARS! THANKS, CHUCK!

Marty stares in disbelief.

MARTY
(quietly)
Go home. Go home to your mom and dad. Do it right now.

And she's off, her skates rumbling on the pavement. He watches her go, until she is engulfed by the thickening shadows.

He walks on. Passing window after window of Charles Krantz's smiling face, like hundreds of housebound ghosts looking out at him. He tries not to look.

And then, he starts RUNNING.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. FELICIA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 24

Marty runs up the driveway, heading for her door. He BANGS ON IT, and seconds later it opens, revealing Felicia, holding a candle. She HUGS HIM TIGHT.

FELICIA
Oh thank God, Marty. Thank god.

MARTY
Did you see them -

FELICIA
Yeah.

MARTY
They just started... showing up...

FELICIA
I know. I saw.

MARTY
Is it just here?

FELICIA
I think it's everywhere, honey. I think it's almost...

She doesn't say the next words, which would have been "the end." Instead, she takes him by the hand, and leads him inside.

HARD CUT TO:

25 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 25

GINNY KRANTZ (30s) sits beside a hospital bed, staring at the occupant. The only sound in the room the steady BIP BIP BIP of the HEART MONITOR. She watches as the patient's chest RISES and FALLS with labored breathing.

She CLOSES HER EYES, muttering a PRAYER quietly.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Mom?

BRIAN (14) is in the doorway. BIKE HELMET in his hand, a little out of breath.

GINNY
Hey kiddo. I'm sorry to pull you out of school, and I'm sorry I couldn't pick you up -

BRIAN
Your text said - you're gonna let them turn off the machines?

GINNY
(sighs)
Yes.

BRIAN
(realizes)
Did they?

GINNY
Yes.

BRIAN
When?

GINNY
An hour ago.

We recognize the man in the bed, even without the black-rimmed glasses, which are on a small TABLE beside the bed. He's thin, pale. DYING, but it's definitely **CHARLES KRANTZ.**

GINNY (CONT'D)
Come sit down.

Brian takes a seat next to his dad. Reaches out, and takes his hand - we note the **CRESCENT-SHAPED SCAR** on Chuck's hand.

BRIAN
How long do you think it'll be?

GINNY
Anytime. Before tomorrow, for sure. You know the machines were just - they were helping him breathe, right? But he's not... Brian, he's not in any pain. That part's over. I'm sorry to spring it on you, I shouldn't have sent you to school this morning but I just - it was time. It's time.

They stare at the man in the bed.

BRIAN
Fuck Glioblastoma, fuck it sideways. Sorry mom.

GINNY
No, you're right. Fuck it sideways.

BRIAN
He's too young. I mean too young by *half*. Explain that to me.

GINNY
I can't. I know it's hard, kiddo, hard for me too but that's all I got. Life's a mystery, so's death.

They fall silent. Listening to the BIP... BIP... BIP... BRIAN looks at the VASES OF FLOWERS in the room.

BRIAN
Jeez, more flowers?

GINNY
Banks are supposed to be heartless but they really loved him at Midwest Trust. They just keep sending them. And they used to send them when he was in the hospital too, they wouldn't let him have them in Oncology though. Never understood that. What'd they think, it would kick off an allergy attack or something?

They turn back to Chuck. BIP. BIP. BIP.

GINNY (CONT'D)
He loved working there. Wasn't a big deal in the grand scheme of things, I suppose, he was never gonna win a Nobel Prize or get a Medal of Freedom or anything, but he did love it. But he loved you the most. You and me the most.

BRIAN
He said he used to love dancing. He said he was good, like really good!

GINNY
Model trains, too. When he was a boy, his Zaydee had a set. You know about his granddad, right? He ever tell you about his granddad?
(beat)
He had a good life, Bri.

BRIAN
Not enough of it. You were praying when I got here, I thought you didn't believe in God.

GINNY
Can't hurt.

BRIAN
I guess I sort of want to believe - but I don't think so. I don't get why it has to be this way. Why God would let it be this way. "It's a mystery"... I mean is that the best people can do?

GINNY
(beat)
Death takes the best of us and death takes the rest of us.

A RASPING breath from Chuck. They stare. His chest RISES, falls... and then GASPS again. Ginny looks at her son, trying to smile through her tears. Trying to reassure.

GINNY (CONT'D)
Get ready, honey. Hold on tight for this part, okay?

CUT TO:

26 EXT. FELICIA'S HOUSE, BACK YARD - NIGHT 26

Marty and Felicia step out the back door of her house into the yard. It's PITCH BLACK around them, save the faint glows from the windows holding CHUCK'S GHOSTLY IMAGE.

They aren't looking at that, though. They're looking up at the NIGHT SKY. THE STARS. They grab PATIO CHAIRS from the table, drag them onto the lawn. Sit back, looking up.

MARTY
That is the brightest I've ever seen the stars. Maybe since I was a kid, in Nebraska, I had a small telescope, and... man, without all the lights, just look at that.

It is indeed magnificent. You can see the RIBBON of the Milky Way, set against millions of beautiful stars.

MARTY (CONT'D)
There's Aquila. The Eagle. There's Cygnus, the Swan. See it?

She takes his hand.

FELICIA
And there's the North Sta-

She stops. Because as she pointed it out, the North Star had GONE OUT. Just TURNED OFF, like a light switch.

As they watch, a few other stars BLINK OUT. Three one moment, then gone.

FELICIA (CONT'D)
Marty, did you see that?

MARTY
Yeah, it just went out. And there goes Mars. Goodbye, Red Planet.

They watch as MORE AND MORE stars BLINK OUT OF EXISTENCE.

FELICIA
Marty I'm scared.

MARTY
I am too.

CUT TO:

27 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER 27

Ginny holds Chuck's hand, tears on her face. She reaches up, touching his forehead. Brian holds Chuck's other hand.

GINNY
It's okay, honey, you go. You go ahead.

Brian can't hold back his tears. He's devastated, and angry.

BRIAN
(shaking his head)
Thirty-nine years -

GINNY
Thirty-nine great years.

She kisses his hand again. Chuck's chest RISES roughly, holding... and collapses with a RASPY EXHALE.

GINNY (CONT'D)
(smiles through her tears)
Thanks Chuck.

She leans forward, planting a kiss on his lips. And the astute viewer may wonder if everything we've seen until now, *every single thing* - has all occurred in THIS ONE MOMENT --

CUT TO:

28 EXT. FELICIA'S HOUSE, BACK YARD - MOMENTS LATER 28

In the growing darkness, Marty and Felicia hear a SONG - faint and echoed - like a tiny radio playing in a great, empty hall. **"Gimme Some Lovin'" by Steve Winwood.**

SONG
And I'm so glad we made it... so glad we made it... why won't you gimme some lovin'... gimme some lovin'... gimme some lovin' -

They hold each other as they watch the STARS GOING OUT. In ones and twos, then by the dozens, then by the hundreds.

As the Milky Way rolls away into darkness, Marty turns to Felicia. He manages one last bittersweet smile.

MARTY
I love -

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT TWO:

Buskers

NARRATOR
With the help of her friend Mac, who has an old van, Taylor Franck sets up her drum kit in her favored spot on the 8th Street Promenade.

HARD CUT TO:

29 EXT. B STREET PROMENADE, CITY - DAY 29

CLOSE ON a SNARE DRUM being set down on the pavement. Hands begin to SET UP THE DRUM KIT. They belong to TAYLOR (20s) and MAC (20).

NARRATOR
It's Thursday afternoon, the weather is fucking gorgeous and the streets are thronged with people looking forward to the weekend, which is always better than the weekend itself.

Mac holds the van doors as Taylor unloads the last of the kit.

MAC
All good, Taylor?

TAYLOR
Yeah, thanks.

MAC
Ten percent's all the thanks I want, sis.

SLAM. Mac heads to the driver's side, Taylor starts assembling the kit. Sets up the hi-hat and the crash cymbal.

NARRATOR
Taylor - and Mac too - work part-time at Doctor Records on Newbury Street but on a good day Taylor can make almost as much busking.

Taylor puts out a battered TOP HAT in front of the kit, with a hand-drawn sign that reads **MAGIC HAT! EVERY CONTRIBUTION DOUBLES!**

Taylor sits on her stool and gives a preparatory paradiddle across the drumheads. A few people glance at her, but most sweep on by, lost in their day.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Busk-drumming isn't what her parents saw for her when she enrolled at Juliard, and they don't know yet that she dropped out.

Taylor SPINS her drumsticks absently. Looking out at the indifferent crowd. Stretching her neck, getting ready. Fastening a COWBELL to her rig. Testing it.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Juliard wanted you to think about what you were doing, and as far as Taylor is concerned, the beat is your friend and thinking is the enemy.

She CRACKS her knuckles. Takes a breath. SHE STARTS.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
She starts warming up, going easy at first, slow tempo, no cowbell, not minding that the Magic Hat stays empty except for her two crumpled dollars and a quarter flipped -

A SKATEBOARD DUDE FLIPS a quarter into the hat -

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
- contemptuously by a dude on a skateboard. There is time. There is a way in. Finding the in is half the fun. Maybe even most of it.

Taylor's hands keep the beat and she closes her eyes, finding her groove.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. A NEARBY STREET - MOMENTS LATER 30

JANICE (22) walks briskly down the crowded street.

NARRATOR
Janice Halliday is on her way home from seven hours at Paper and Page and may walk all the way to the ocean. Because right, now walking is what she wants.

31 INT. BOOKSTORE - EARLIER 31

Janice is behind the counter, ringing up a transaction, when she sees her PHONE LIGHTING UP.

NARRATOR
Her boyfriend of sixteen months just broke up with her, and he did it the modern way -

CLOSE ON THE TEXT MESSAGES:

"We r just not right for each other :("

"U will always be in my heart!"

"Friends 4ever OK? :)"

Janice STARES, even as her customer waits for the change.

JANICE
(beat)
MOTHER FU-

32 EXT. A NEARBY STREET - CONTINUOUS 32

Janice WALKS. Shaking her head. Trying not to cry.

NARRATOR
It was totally unexpected, like having a door slammed in your face just as you were getting ready to walk through it. It was -

JANICE
Fucking bullshit -

NARRATOR
- fucking bullshit. She isn't in love with him, never even kidded herself that she was but still it -

JANICE
- fucking sucks -

NARRATOR
- is a dismaying shock, just the same. She supposes she'll have some wine when she gets home and cry.
(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Maybe cue up one of her big-band playlists and dance drunk around the room, she loved to dance in High School, those Friday night dances were happy times and maybe she can recapture a little of that happiness.

JANICE
Fucking *really!?*

A PASSERBY gives her a sharp look.

JANICE (CONT'D)
(realizing)
Sorry, not you - fucking fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck

Up ahead, she hears DRUMMING.

CUT TO:

33 INT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON 33

CLOSE ON a fresh coffee cup placed on the counter. Written on the cup is the word CHUCK.

A hand grabs the cup. We note the **CRESCENT-SHAPED SCAR.**

34 EXT. ANOTHER STREET - MOMENTS LATER 34

CHUCK (39 years old) walks along, sipping his coffee with one hand and carrying a black briefcase in the other. Wearing a sharp suit, and long autumnal coat, and BLACK-RIMMED GLASSES.

NARRATOR
Charles Krantz - Chuck, to his friends - is dressed in the armor of accountancy: gray suit, blue shirt, blue tie.

CLOSE ON HIS FEET.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
His Samuel Windsor shoes are inexpensive but sturdy.

He turns a corner, checking his watch.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
He's here for a week-long conference titled Banking in the Twenty-First Century. He's been sent by his bank, Midwest Trust, all expenses paid.

35 EXT. ANOTHER STREET - LATER 35

Chuck SITS on a bench, finishing his coffee.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Chuck has enjoyed the speakers and the panels - he was on one panel and is scheduled to be on another before the conference ends at noon tomorrow - but has no wish to spend his off-duty hours in the company of seventy other accountants. He speaks their language, but likes to think he speaks others, as well. At least he did, although some of the vocabulary is now lost.

36 EXT. ANOTHER STREET - LATER 36

CLOSE ON CHUCK'S SHOES as he walks.

NARRATOR
Now his sensible Samuel Windsor Oxfords are taking him for an afternoon walk. His life is narrower than the one he once hoped for but he's made peace with that. He understands that narrowing is the natural order of things.

37 EXT. B STREET PROMENADE - MOMENTS LATER 37

Chuck turns onto the crowded B Street Promenade. We become aware of the DISTANT SOUND OF DRUMS.

NARRATOR
He has a wife - Ginny - to whom he is scrupulously faithful, and an intelligent, good-humored son in middle school. He also has only nine months to live, though he doesn't know that yet.

AT THE DRUM SET -

Taylor PLAYS HER DRUMS. Looking around, a little bored.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Taylor has been on the job for ten minutes now and has nothing to show for it.

CHUCK, heading toward him. Head down. Lost in thought.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
She sees a Mr. Businessman type coming toward her, and something about him - God knows what - makes Taylor want to announce his approach.

Taylor CHANGES THE BEAT.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
She slips first into a reggae beat, then something slinkier. And for the first time today, Taylor feels a spark and begins to whack the cowbell on the downbeat. It's pretty cool. The groove has arrived, and the groove is like a road you want to follow. She could speed the beat up, get some tom in there but she's watching Mr. Businessman and that seems wrong for this dude.

Chuck gets closer, briefcase swinging, eyes still downcast.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
She believes Mr. Businessman will just go past on his way to the Business Hotel and when he's gone Taylor will switch to something else. But instead of floating on by...

CHUCK STOPS. In front of the drum set, just beside the top hat. Stands PERFECTLY STILL.

Taylor keeps playing, a little confused.

Chuck just STANDS. Around him, the world bustles on. But Chuck Krantz stands as still as a statue, briefcase in his hand, head slightly downcast.

Taylor stares at him, confused. He realizes -

Chuck is smiling.

For a few seconds he stands, as Taylor continues to play out the beat. And then...

Chuck PUTS HIS BRIEFCASE DOWN. Next to the hat...

And starts MOVING HIS HIPS side to side with the beat.

Just his hips, nothing else. Everything else stays still.

Taylor chuckles to herself.

TAYLOR
Go, man!

She starts working the hi-hat in quick tender strokes, and keeps at the cowbell offbeat, using the kick-pedal to add a little boom.

Chuck raises his hand, and begins ticking his forefinger to the beat.

Taylor changes the beat. Something a little more exotic.

Chuck steps back from his briefcase so he won't trip -

And puts his hands on his moving hips -

- does a jivey clockwise turn like an about-face.

Someone LAUGHS, and someone else APPLAUDS, but most people step to the side to avoid Chuck as they pass him.

Chuck suddenly SPINS the other way, sending the TAILS OF HIS COAT FLYING.

He lifts one leg and spins on the other heel -

Then CLASPS his hands behind his back -

AND **MOONWALKS** on the pavement.

Taylor GRINS in surprise and delight.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Yeah!

She PICKS UP THE PACE, going from the cowbell to the floor tom with his left hand, working the kick-pedal, never losing the metallic sighing of the hi-hat.

Chuck MOONWALKS, SPINNING AGAIN -

COAT TAILS FLYING -

And MOONWALKS the other way.

PEOPLE ARE GATHERING NOW.

An ONLOOKER TOSSES a $5 into the TOP HAT.

ONLOOKER
Go man go!

But Chuck doesn't need the encouragement. He's into it now.

He frees the button on his suit coat -

BRUSHES the coat behind him with the backs of his hands -

HOOKS his thumbs into his belt like a gunslinger -

DOES A MODIFIED SPLIT, out and back.

Then a QUICK-STEP and TURN.

At the drums, Taylor starts LAUGHING and NODDING.

THE CROWD IS GROWING.

Chuck puts his right show on his left calf -

SPINS AGAIN -

And when he comes back front and center he looks up -

AND SEES JANICE. Standing at the front of the growing circle of onlookers, watching him with smiling, fascinated eyes.

Chuck HOLDS OUT HIS HANDS TO HER -

SNAPPING HIS FINGERS -

CHUCK
Come on.

Janice BLINKS, like someone just threw water at her. But Chuck is SMILING, and it's a NICE SMILE.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
Come on, little sister. Let's dance.

Taylor grins from the drums. Janice just STARES at Chuck, a small SMILE spreading on her face. It's SURREAL.

TAYLOR
Dance dance dance!

Janice breaks into a “what the hell” smile, tosses her purse down beside Chuck’s briefcase -

AND TAKES HIS HANDS.

The second Taylor sees their hands meet, she LETS LOOSE. Hammering like a soldier.

Chuck TWIRLS Janice -

PUTS A HAND ON HER WAIST -

PULLS HER TO HIM -

And quick-steps her past the drum kit.

She PULLS AWAY -

Waving her finger in a “naughty naughty” gesture -

Then SPINS BACK and GRASPS both of his hands.

As if they had practiced this a hundred times, he does another MODIFIED SPLIT and she -

SHOOTS BETWEEN HIS LEGS -

There are some GASPS as she PROPS HERSELF UP on one tented hand -

Then SPRINGS BACK UP. LAUGHING.

They CIRCLE EACH OTHER. Both laughing now. And then...

Chuck starts to COME BACK TO REALITY. His shoulders SLUMP, he breaks the beat, holding his hands up in front of him -

CHUCK
(laughing)
Okay, okay -

Janice SPINS in place, hand out to him.

CHUCK (CONT’D)
No more, I can’t -

She SPRINGS to him, puts her hands on his shoulders -

And he can after all.

He CATCHES HER by the waist, TURNING HER on his HIP -

And SETTING HER NEATLY on the pavement.

He LIFTS HER LEFT HAND -

She SPINS beneath it like a hopped-up ballerina.

At the drums, TAYLOR IS FLYING. She's maybe never played this way in her life, the sticks a BLUR in her frenzied hands.

Around them, the crowd is CLAPPING NOW. ON THE BEAT. There must be A HUNDRED PEOPLE WATCHING NOW.

And then Taylor SLOWS IT - HITTING THE HI-HAT - BUILDING ANTICIPATION AS -

CHUCK AND JANICE CIRCLE EACH OTHER, hips and hands swinging as they get ready for the big finale.

Chuck GLANCES at Taylor, who NODS as she starts BUILDING THE PEDAL, THE CROWD STOMPING ALONG AS -

Chuck and Janice BRING THE HOUSE DOWN.

Taylor UNLEASHES ALL SHE HAS ON THE DRUMS AS -

Chuck THROWS HIS HAND OUT -

CATCHING JANICE'S -

And the rest is an EXPLOSION OF MOVEMENT AND JOY.

It looks like they've been preparing for this their whole lives. Chuck HURLS JANICE around him -

Raising his leg as she SOARS BENEATH THEM -

Pulling her back through with a TOSS INTO THE AIR -

CATCHING HER EASILY as she SPIRALS AROUND HIS TORSO -

HAIR AND COATTAILS FLYING -

THE CROWD GOES INSANE -

And then, in a flurry of movement and percussion -

IT'S OVER.

Taylor RUNS THE DRUMS ONE TIME, HITS THE CYMBALS -

And Chuck and Janice STRIKE THEIR FINAL POSE. Panting with exhaustion. Around them, the crowd GOES INSANE.

Chuck and Janice look at each other, each out of breath and more than a little STUNNED at themselves.

JANICE
What are we doing?

CHUCK
(laughing)
I don’t know.

He lifts her back up. They turn to the crowd, and BOW. The applause is DEAFENING.

And the top hat is OVERFLOWING with cash.

ONLOOKERS
More! More!

Chuck looks out at the crowd, realizes there are PHONES IN HANDS, FILMING THEM. And suddenly, reality crashes back. He gently releases Janice, and steps back.

Janice looks at him with a bright smile in her eyes, and we see that she’s up for more.

But Chuck...

Chuck is danced out.

He looks at Taylor, who sees it in his eyes. Taylor nods a little, telling him she understands.

TAYLOR
No more today, folks. We gotta quit while we’re ahead.

Murmurs of disapproval from the crowd, but more applause too. And then they start to disperse.

There are back pats, high-fives, hand-shakes as people congratulate the drummer and the two dancers.

And the Magic Hat is overflowing.

CUT TO:

38 EXT. B STREET PROMENADE - LATER 38

Mac is back with his van. Chuck and Janice help the guys load the drum set into the back.

39 INT. MAC'S VAN - LATER 39

They drive. Mac and Taylor up front, Chuck and Janice in the back. Chuck has to rest his Samuel Windsors on a pile of comic books. He stares at them, smiling a little.

TAYLOR
Let's hit the pond.

MAC
We'll never find parking by the Common.

TAYLOR
We will today. Today is magic.

40 EXT. CITY POND - LATER 40

The van is PARKED just feet away from the park's edge. Rockstar parking indeed.

By the water, Taylor counts out the cash from the hat. Dividing it up. Chuck looks around, watching as Mac TOSSES CRACKERS to the ducks.

Taylor HOLDS OUT CASH to Janice.

JANICE
Oh no, that's yours.

TAYLOR
Nope, we split even. By myself I wouldn't have made half this much if I drummed 'til midnight.

Chuck WINCES, closing his eyes.

JANICE
You okay?

CHUCK
Yeah, just - one of my headaches.

Taylor holds out the cash insistently to Chuck.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
I don't need it, you keep it.

TAYLOR
Come on, man. You earned it. Buy yourself dinner, or give it away, but I'm handing it to you. Right is right.

Finally, Chuck takes the cash.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Where'd you learn to dance like that?

CHUCK
Twirlers and spinners, but my grandma showed me the best moves.

TAYLOR
What about you?

JANICE
Pretty much the same. Where'd you learn to drum?

TAYLOR
Self-taught. We could do this for a living, you know it? I really think we busk our way to fame and fortune.

Chuck smiles. The camera pans across Chuck and Janice, and we realize - in their minds anyway - they're picturing just that. A daydream of an alternate life.

JANICE
What made you stop in front of me? And what made you start moving?

Chuck thinks.

NARRATOR
He could say it was because he was thinking about his old half-assed band, the Retros, and how he liked to dance across the stage during instrumental breaks. But that's not it.

Chuck can't answer. He manages a small shrug.

JANICE
Well it was magic. Like your hat.

Mac starts walking back to them.

MAC
Taylor, we gotta roll or you're gonna end up spending your take paying my parking ticket.

TAYLOR
Sure you don't want to change careers, guys? We could busk this town from Beacon Hill to Roxbury. Make a name for ourselves.

CHUCK
I've got a conference tomorrow, and I gotta fly home - I've got a wife and son waiting for me, and they're kind of the greatest.

JANICE
And I can't do it by myself, it'd be Ginger without Fred.

TAYLOR
I hear that. But you gotta get in here before you go. Group hug.

Chuck laughs. But Taylor is earnest. They all hug.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
Buskers forever.

And then the moment is over.

MAC
Yeah, buskers forever but let's get out of here before the meter maid shows up.

The break the hug, and start toward the van.

JANICE
You heading back? Can I walk with you?

CHUCK
Sure thing, little sister.

CUT TO:

41 EXT. CITY STREETS - EVENING 41

Chuck and Janice walk beside each other.

CHUCK
I'm so sorry, that sucks.

JANICE
It does suck. He was a nice guy - at least I thought so - a pretty good lover, fun to be with, and all. I bet he met someone. He met someone and he's gonna spend the weekend with her picking apples in New Hampshire and fucking in some B&B. And if I can find a video of us dancing, and I'm gonna look because I bet we go viral, I'm gonna send it to him with a text - a text that says this is what you're missing, you pile of shit-emoji.

CHUCK
You're gonna be fine. I don't know a lot, but I know that much. You've got a bright sunbeam in front of you, you're gonna step right into it, I can tell. But yeah. It sucks. Not much else to say.

JANICE
Everything goes down the drain and all we can say is 'that sucks.' Maybe we're going down the drain too.

Chuck considers this.

JANICE (CONT'D)
Hey, if we can find our video you should send it to your wife!

CHUCK
I think I will. She won't believe it.

JANICE
We'll be the next viral sensation!

CHUCK
Yeah, but somewhere right now someone's filming a dog juggling soda bottles, or a goat smoking a cigar, but it's better to get out in front, just in case.

He reaches up, touching his head. Wincing again.

JANICE
You okay?

CHUCK
Yeah, it’s nothing.

JANICE
I’m this way.

She points.

CHUCK
I’m that way.

She turns to him smiling.

JANICE
Thank you for the dance.

She turns and heads down the street. He watches her go. As she heads away, someone else enters the frame - **IRIS ON ROLLER SKATES**, heading up the side of the street.

We might not realize, we may not notice - but she might be the SAME IRIS that Marty watched as she skated away in darkness. SAME CLOTHES, SAME HAIR, SAME SKATES.

Chuck only barely notices her, as he is watching Janice. He watches her, in fact, until she’s completely out of sight...

As he finally goes his way, he PASSES A MAN on the sidewalk, walking the other way. WE RECOGNIZE HIS FACE as Chuck passes him - when we saw him, we knew him as:

BRI. Wearing his scrubs.

Chuck only BARELY GLANCES at him, just long enough to see his face - ONLY ENOUGH TIME FOR THAT FACE TO BECOME PART OF CHUCK’S IMAGINATION.

CUT TO:

42 EXT. B STREET PROMENADE - LATER 42

Chuck returns to the promenade. It’s bustling with the night life, the bars are coming into their time. He moves up the sidewalk, briefcase swinging just like before.

He makes it to the spot where he danced. It’s empty now, just people passing, going about their business. No idea what magic lived in this spot just a few hours ago.

NARRATOR
As he passes the place where Taylor set up her drums, those two questions recur: why did he stop to listen, and why did he start to dance?

Chuck frowns. Looks around the promenade.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
He doesn't know. And would answers make a good thing better?

Chuck starts to walk. We watch him as he heads away from us, starting to fall into the sea of people, all going about their lives.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Later he'll lose the ability to walk, never mind dancing with little sister on the promenade. Later he'll lose the ability to chew food. Later he'll forget his wife's name. Later he'll lose his grip on the difference between waking and sleeping and enter a land of pain so great he will wonder why God made the world.

Chuck is almost gone now as the street lights come on.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
What he will remember - occasionally - is how he stopped, and dropped his briefcase, and began to move his hips to the beat of the drums, and he will think that is why God made the world.
(beat)
Just that.

We watch until he is out of sight.

CUT TO BLACK.

ACT ONE:

I Contain Multitudes

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Chuck was looking forward to having a baby sister. Of course he was also looking forward to having parents, but none of that worked out thanks to an patch of well-hidden ice on an I-95 overpass.

43 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 43

CHUCK plays on the floor as his grandparents ALBIE (60s) and SARAH (late 50s) watch TV and read. We note the TOY TRAIN SET running through the living room.

NARRATOR
Chuck wasn't in the car when it happened because his parents were having a dinner date and he was being babysat by his grandparents, who at the time he was still calling Zaydee and Bubbie. He was seven years old.

44 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - ANOTHER NIGHT 44

They sit in silence at the table, eating dinner.

NARRATOR
For a year and a half it was a house of unadulterated sadness. Albie and Sarah Krantz had not only lost their son and daughter-in-law, they had lost the granddaughter who would have been born just three months later.

45 INT. CHUCK'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK 45

Little Chuck is being tucked in by his MOTHER (30s).

NARRATOR
The name had already been picked out: Alyssa. When Chuck said that sounded to him like rain, his mother had laughed and cried at the same time. He never forgot that.

Close on Chuck's mother as she does just that.

CUT TO:

46 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, ALBIE'S OFFICE - ANOTHER NIGHT 46

Close on the large CALCULATOR as Albie PUNCHES NUMBERS. He's surrounded by FILES, pouring over RECEIPTS and BANK STATEMENTS. CHEWING AWAY ON A PIPE.

NARRATOR
Albie processed his grief through his two absolutes - numbers, and alcohol.

47 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - ANOTHER NIGHT 47

Sarah stands in front of the counter, recipe book open. But she just STARES AT IT.

NARRATOR
Sarah, though, could find no joy in her usual pleasures. She loved the flavors of life - music, art, and food - but now found the world quiet and grey and flavorless.

DISSOLVE TO:

48 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY 48

Chuck (NOW TEN) turns the corner to see Sarah in the kitchen.

NARRATOR
Some of the good feelings came back into the house with time. There were a lot of take-out meals after the accident, but around the time Chuck turned ten his Grandma started cooking again. She liked rock and roll while she was cooking, music Chuck would have thought much too young for her, but which she clearly enjoyed.

Sarah TAPS HER FOOT to the beat of a song on the radio - **"Dance Hall Days" by Wang Chung.** Then turns, seeing Chuck in the doorway. She SNAPS HER FINGERS, holding out her hand to him - JUST LIKE Chuck will do with Janice years from now -

- and smiles.

SARAH
Come on, little brother, let's dance.

He takes her hand, and she starts to dance.

49 MONTAGE: JUMP CUTS of Chuck and Sarah dancing in the kitchen - 49

- on VARIOUS DAYS, TO VARIOUS SONGS.

CHUCK WATCHING Sarah as she demonstrates, then trying to mimic her moves.

SARAH AND CHUCK, cutting a rug together.

50 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - ANOTHER DAY 50

Sarah drops a PILE of RENTED BLOCKBUSTER VIDEOS on top of the television, popping the first one into the VCR: ***West Side Story. Singin' in the Rain. Cabaret.***

We see CHUCK WATCHING FROM THE COUCH, mesmerized.

Then, she puts in ***All that Jazz*** -

Which makes Sarah quickly cover Chuck's eyes, ejecting the tape and putting in:

Cover Girl*, with Gene Kelly and Rita Hayworth.*

SARAH
You could learn those moves. You're a natural, kiddo.

CHUCK
Where did you learn?

SARAH
High School.

CHUCK
What were you like in High School?

SARAH
I was a *kusit*. But don't tell your Zaydee I said that. He's old-school, that one.

NARRATOR
Chuck never told.

CUT TO:

51 EXT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON 51

We get our first look at the house itself. A lovely older Victorian. As we look at it, we begin TILTING UP --

NARRATOR
His grandparents' house became every inch his home, but with one exception...

Revealing a CUPOLA at the top - an octagonal room on top of the roof with a large window.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
... the cupola on the roof.

52 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, STAIRS TO CUPOLA - EVENING 52

Chuck leans around the corner, looking up the stairway toward the CLOSED DOOR at the top. They are narrow stairs, lit by a **SINGLE HANGING BULB** on a **BLACK CORD.**

All leading a wooden door -

THAT IS **PADLOCKED** SHUT.

AND WE SUDDENLY RECOGNIZE THIS STAIRWAY. We saw it long ago (or long from now), in MARTY'S HOUSE.

Chuck sighs. SCARED. He TIPTOES toward it. The floorboards CREAK beneath his feet.

When he reaches the door, he examines the YALE PADLOCK installed above the handle. Someone wants to keep this room closed...

NARRATOR
Chuck was forbidden to go into the cupola. That was his grandfather's rule, and it was absolute. Albie wasn't a stern man in other matters, he was downright gentle in most respects - but on this point, he was rigid.
(beat)
Chuck asked about it, of course, and more than once. What was up there? What could you see from the high window? And the big question: ***why was the room locked?*** *Grandma said -*

53 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - ANOTHER NIGHT 53

They sit at dinner.

SARAH
- because the floor isn't safe and you might go right through it.

NARRATOR
Grandpa said -

54 EXT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, PORCH - ANOTHER NIGHT 54

Albie sits in his recliner, KNOCKING TOBACCO FROM HIS PIPE (exactly like Sam did earlier). Chuck sits at his feet.

ALBIE
- there's nothing up there 'cuz of that rotten floor, and the only thing you can see through the windows is a shopping center. Shopping center; big whoop.

Chuck's shoulders slump a little. Disappointed.

NARRATOR
He said that until one night, just before Chuck's eleventh birthday, when he told at least part of the truth.

CUT TO:

55 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT 55

Albie watches TV. He's watching an episode of CARL SAGAN'S COSMOS as he DRINKS SOME WHISKEY.

CARL SAGAN (O.S.)
- the Cosmic Calendar compresses the local history of the universe into a single year...

Chuck sits against the recliner, staring at the TV, where CARL SAGAN stands before a graphic of the COSMIC CALENDAR - the history of the universe, compressed to 12 months.

CARL SAGAN (ON TV) (CONT'D)
Every month is one and a quarter billion years long. Each day represents forty million years.
(MORE)

CARL SAGAN (ON TV) (CONT'D)
Each second stands for some five hundred years of our history. The blinking of an eye in the drama of cosmic time -

Close on Albie as he REFILLS HIS DRINK.

NARRATOR
Drinking is not good for secrets, and after the death of his son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter to be, Alyssa who sounds like rain, Albie Krantz drank a great deal.

Chuck lets out a sigh.

CHUCK
I'll bet you can see way past the Westford Mall. Gotta be able to see the whole town from up there, I bet.

Albie sighs. MUTES the television. And takes another drink.

ALBIE
If you went up there you might see a lot more than you wanted. That's why it's locked, Chucko.

Chuck looks up at him. And WAITS.

NARRATOR
He wanted to ask what Grandpa meant, but the adult part of him - not there in person, no, not at ten, but something that had begun to speak on rare occasions - told him to be quiet. Be quiet... and wait.

He stares at Albie, who takes another drink. And then...

ALBIE
You know what style this house is?

CHUCK
Victorian.

ALBIE
That's right, and not pretend Victorian, either. It was built in 1885, been remodeled half a dozen times since, but the cupola was there from the start.
(MORE)

ALBIE (CONT'D)
Your Bubbie and I bought it when the tax business really took off, and we got it for a song. Been here since '71 and in all those years I haven't been up to that damn cupola half a dozen times.

CHUCK
'Cuz the floor's rotted?

ALBIE
'Cuz it's full of ghosts.

Chuck's eyes LIGHT UP. Albie doesn't wink, doesn't offer any sparkling mischief. No. He's serious.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
You remember Scrooge, the Scrooge movie we watched?

CHUCK
Yeah, I remember.

ALBIE
You think of that as a ghost story?

CHUCK
I guess so.

ALBIE
Heard someone say it was a ghost story.
(beat, to himself)
Christmas Yet to Come.

He laughs to himself, but there's no humor in it. He drinks more. Stares past Chuck as he talks now.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
Jefferies boy was a month later. Henry Peterson... that took longer. Four, maybe five years on and by then I'd almost forgotten what I saw up there. *Almost.*

He taps his head, as if he's proud of his recall. Drinks. Then points to Chuck with the glass.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
Said I'd never go up there again after that and I wish I hadn't because of Sarah - because of your Bubbie, Chucko, *your sweet Bubbie - and the bread.*

Chuck stares at him, confused. He'd expected some kind of explanation, some kind of revelation... but this is nonsense. Albie leans forward, like he's telling a secret.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
It's the waiting, Chucky, that's the hard part.

The KITCHEN DOOR BURSTS OPEN, and Sarah steps in.

SARAH
Oh lord, it's getting cold out there! Vera says hi, she says thanks for the soup, but lord she laid the gossip on me, laid it good. 'Course, that's why we have a Vera, isn't it?

Albie sits back. Reaches for the remote.

ALBIE
Yeah? What's the latest?

But as he asks this, he UNMUTES the tv. It's on a COMMERCIAL NOW. Sarah sits on the couch, talking over the show.

SARAH
Well, I don't know if you heard but Trish is saying that Karen and Matty are in therapy. Again. Thinking someone had some extracurricular activity, but get this - they think it's Karen.

CHUCK
Who's Henry Peterson, Zaydee?

Sarah LOOKS AT CHUCK. Catching her breath.

56 EXT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE - NIGHT 56

Sarah shoos Albie out the front door.

SARAH
And some pancake mix too, not the orange box but the yellow box, you got all that?

ALBIE
I got it.

SARAH
You need me to write it down?

ALBIE
I got it.

SARAH
And don’t you think about driving, the walk will sober you up.

He heads off across the lawn. She watches him go.

57 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 57

Sarah steps back in. Chuck is settling into Albie’s recliner, opening a book.

Sarah sits on the couch beside him, exhaling.

SARAH
He’ll be back with some groceries, and then how about we do some s'mores tonight. In the fireplace.

CHUCK
Yeah?

SARAH
Yeah.
(beat, casual)
Was he blabbing to you about his ghosts?

Chuck turns and looks at her. Again, he waits.

SARAH (CONT’D)
(rolling her eyes)
The ones that live in the cupola?

CHUCK
Yeah. Are there? Ghosts I mean?

SARAH
What do you think, *hantel?* I wouldn’t pay too much attention to Zaydee. He’s a good man, but sometimes - well sometimes he drinks too much. Then he rides his hobby horses. I’m sure you know what I’m talking about.

Chuck stares her down. He doesn’t quite know.

CHUCK
Who was the “Jefferies boy”?

SARAH
(long beat)
Well that was a very sad thing, kiddo. He lived on the next block over and got hit by a car when he chased a ball into the street. It happened a long time ago.

Chuck doesn't answer. He waits again, just in case there's more... and in this case, there is.

SARAH (CONT'D)
If your grandpa told you he saw it before it happened, he was mistaken. Or making it up for one of his jokes. He just drinks too much.

She sits back, reaching for a book. She starts reading, as Chuck WATCHES HER.

58 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, STAIRS TO CUPOLA - NIGHT 58

Chuck turns the corner, looking up once again at the locked cupola door. The single bulb sways slightly on its cord, casting odd shadows.

He cautiously approaches the door. His hand reaches up, touching the Yale padlock, trying not to make noise. He slowly LEANS IN, pressing his ear against the door. He listens. He listens. Listens...

NOTHING. He turns, quietly creeping back down the stairs, trying not to make them creak.

CUT TO:

59 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - ANOTHER DAY 59

Chuck watches as his grandma finishes wrapping up some blueberry muffins with aluminum foil.

CHUCK
You know I could take those to Mrs. Stanley if you want!

Sarah looks up at him.

SARAH
Well that's very thoughtful of you, I bet Vera'd love that. Okay. Why don't you do that.
(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)
Just remember to look both ways when you cross the street.

60 INT. MRS. STANLEY'S KITCHEN - LATER THAT DAY 60

VERA STANLEY (60s) sinks her teeth into one of the muffins. She's a large woman, and wears an OXYGEN TUBE in her nostrils. Chuck watches her.

VERA
Just wonderful. Your grandmother's an artist. Thank you for bringing them over, was that your idea? Be honest.

CHUCK
It was.

VERA
Well I'll be - your grandma always comes over here herself, we talk each other's ears off, I thought maybe she was getting tired of all the gossip!

CHUCK
No ma'am.

VERA
Can I make you some tea?

CHUCK
I don't drink tea, but I wouldn't mind a glass of milk.

61 MINUTES LATER, AT THE TABLE: 61

Chuck sips his milk as Vera helps herself to another muffin.

VERA
Your gramma's a saint. Now what about your granddad, did he get that thing on his back looked at? Tell me everything.

CHUCK
Yeah, the doctor took it off and had it tested. It wasn't one of the bad ones.

VERA
Well thank god for that.

CHUCK
Yeah.

Chuck watches her. And then, the real reason he wanted to come over becomes apparent...

CHUCK (CONT'D)
He was talking to grandma about someone named Henry Peterson. I guess he's dead.

Vera looks at him quizzically. He waits. And then...

VERA
Oh that was so sad. So awful. He was a bookkeeper like your granddad, you know. Did a lot of the other businesses in town, the one's your Zaydee didn't do.

CHUCK
How'd it happen?

VERA
Oh, you don't want to know about that kind of stuff.

CHUCK
Grandad said it was peaceful -

VERA
Peaceful! He killed himself. Hung himself. His wife, see, she ran away with a younger man! Hardly old enough to vote and *she was in her forties!* What do you think of that!

CHUCK
(guessing)
Wow!

VERA
Damn right, wow, and I hear -

She suddenly remembers she isn't talking to an adult.

VERA (CONT'D)
Anyway. It was very sad. So what's happening at school? Who's smooching who these days?

Chuck takes this in. Manages a smile, and sips his milk.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. SCHOOL - ANOTHER DAY 62

A typical suburban middle school. We hear a voice:

MISS RICHARDS (O.S.)
"Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer. Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself, *I am large; I contain multitudes.*"

63 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 63

The class listens as MISS RICHARDS (early 20s) reads from her book. On the blackboard are the words: **WALT WHITMAN**

NARRATOR
On the last day of sixth grade, Miss Richards - a sweet, hippy-dippyish young woman who had no command of discipline and would probably not last long in the public education system - tried to recite to Chuck's class some verse of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself."

MISS RICHARDS
"I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles" -

The class is ROWDY. Throwing things, giggling. She tries to raise her voice over the murmurs.

MISS RICHARDS (CONT'D)
"You will hardly know who I am or what I mean, but I shall be good health to you nevertheless and filter and fibre your blood."

Chuck tries to listen, but the class is getting ridiculous now. Shouting, laughing. A few kids punching at each other.

MISS RICHARDS (CONT'D)
(trying to talk over them)
"Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged, missing me one place search another... I stop somewhere...
(giving up)
Waiting for you..."

64 INT. CLASSROOM - LATER 64

Class is over. The kids are filing out. Miss Richards sits at desk, utterly defeated and staring down at her book. Chuck is the last to go. He approaches her.

She blows a strand of hair from her forehead. When she sees Chuck standing beside the desk, she gives him a weary smile.

MISS RICHARDS
That went well, don't you think?

CHUCK
Sorry about that.
(beat)
What's he mean when he says "I am large, I contain multitudes?"

She brightens. Props one fist on her chin and looks at him.

MISS RICHARDS
What do you think it means?

CHUCK
All the people he knows?

MISS RICHARDS
Yes, but maybe he means even more. Lean forward.

He leans over her desk. Very gently, she puts her palms to his temples.

MISS RICHARDS (CONT'D)
What's in there between my hands?

CHUCK
My brain.

MISS RICHARDS
Not what I mean. What's in there? Right between my hands, right now?

CHUCK
I dunno.

MISS RICHARDS
All the people you know?

CHUCK
I guess.

MISS RICHARDS
Just the people you know?

CHUCK
More.

MISS RICHARDS
That's right. Why?

CHUCK
Memories.

MISS RICHARDS
Right again.

CHUCK
And people who *weren't, ever*, like Alyssa, sounds like rain.

She doesn't understand this. But that doesn't matter.

MISS RICHARDS
Everything you see. Everything you know. The *world*, Chuck. Planes in the sky, manhole covers in the street. Every year that you live, that world inside your head will get bigger and brighter, more detailed and complex. You'll build cities and countries and continents and you'll fill them with people and faces, real and imagined. Do you understand?

CHUCK
I think so.

MISS RICHARDS
And don't stop there, you fill the whole thing. With everyone you ever meet, everyone you ever know, everyone you ever just imagine. It'll be a universe, a whole universe, right between my hands. *You... contain... multitudes.*

Chuck smiles. But then, his smile fades as he thinks the next thought.

CHUCK
So what happens to that universe if someone - I dunno - gets hit by a car? Or hit a patch of ice and go off an overpass. Or don't get to be born yet.

She slowly takes her hands away.

MISS RICHARDS
Are you alright, Chuck?

CHUCK
Yes.

MISS RICHARDS
Are you sure?

CHUCK
Yes.

MISS RICHARDS
Don't worry about those things, not yet. You have so much living to do, don't dwell on... well, don't dwell too much on dying. Just remember. You contain multitudes, Chuck. How wonderful is that?
(beat)
Go on. You're a good boy. I've enjoyed having you in class.

He heads for the door. But he stops in the doorway.

CHUCK
Miss Richards, do you believe in ghosts?

MISS RICHARDS
(considers)
I believe memories *are* ghosts. But spooks flapping along the halls of musty castles, or hiding under the bed, or bumping around in attics? I think those only exist in books and movies.
(beat)
Enjoy your summer, Chuck.

He smiles, and heads out into the hallway. She watches him go, smiling a little herself.

The poem might have bombed, but that last little convo... yeah, that was worth it.

CUT TO:

65 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 65

Chuck steps out of the classroom. He walks up the hall, thinking about what she said.

He stops for a few moments, looking down at his feet - not unlike he'll stop another day, long from now, in front of a drum kit on the promenade.

Today he just looks behind him, taking it in. And then turns to an OPEN CLASSROOM door, glancing inside. Starting to TAKE NOTE of the things in his world.

He starts off, down the hallway. And as he goes, we PAN OVER to look into the classroom he was just staring at -

And we see the EMPTY CLASSROOM, with the TEACHER sitting at his desk. A teacher whose FACE IS FAMILIAR.

A teacher we knew as **MARTY ANDERSON.**

He doesn't look up from his work, just grades his papers.

CUT TO:

66 EXT. CEMETERY - DAY 66

A FUNERAL in progress. A medium sized crowd. But we see ALBIE and CHUCK up front.

NARRATOR
Chuck did enjoy his summer until August, when Grandma died.

CLOSE ON CHUCK as he watches the casket. Trying to process death - not an emotional wreck like some of the adults around him, but more stoic. Introspect. Thoughtful. Curious.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
It happened at the grocery store down the street, in public, which was a little undignified, but at least it was the kind of death where people can safely say -

67 LATER: Several MOURNERS approach Chuck, taking his hand. 67

MOURNER
- thank God she didn't suffer.

Chuck nods as the mourner moves along, replaced by another.

NARRATOR
The other standby -

MOURNER 2
- she had a long, full life -

NARRATOR
- was more of a gray area; Sarah Krantz had yet to reach her mid-sixties.

CUT TO:

68 EXT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE - NIGHT 68

The house looks dark, sad.

NARRATOR
Once more the house on Pilchard Street was one of unadulterated sadness.

69 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, ALBIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT 69

Albie sits at his desk, wearing a mourning band, working his numbers and drinking his whiskey. Punching data into his calculator, erasing work on the ledgers. Moving to the next file.

NARRATOR
Albie wore his mourning band, and lost weight, and stopped telling his jokes and began to look older than his seventy years.

Chuck watches from the doorway.

Chuck stares sadly at Albie.

CHUCK
You need anything, Zaydee?

Albie doesn't answer. He's lost in thought.

CUT TO:

70 INT. GROCERY STORE - ANOTHER DAY 70

Chuck approaches the checkout with a soda and a Kit Kat bar.

CLERK
That's it?

CHUCK
Yeah.

CLERK
Buck seventy five.

CHUCK
That lady who was in here a few weeks ago, the one who died... where was she? When it happened?

The clerk looks up at him.

CLERK
Kid, that's a little creepy.

CHUCK
She was my grandma. I was at the pool when it happened, I came home calling for her and Grandpa told me she was dead. He said it happened here.

The clerk softens.

CLERK
Oh man, I'm sorry. It was over there. Third aisle.

Chuck heads to the third aisle, but part of him already knows what he's going to see.

IN AISLE THREE: Among other things, it's the aisle with the BREAD. He stares at the loaves on the shelf as the clerk approaches behind him.

CLERK (CONT'D)
She was getting a loaf of bread. Pulled down almost everything on the shelf when she collapsed. I'm sorry if that's too much information.

CHUCK
Nah. I already knew that.

CUT TO:

71 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, ALBIE'S OFFICE - THAT NIGHT 71

Albie has his HEAD DOWN on his desk. The EMPTY BOTTLE beside him.

Chuck is NEXT TO THE DESK, standing stock still. Looking at -

The **KEY RING** by Albie's hand. With a SERIES of keys.

He REACHES OUT, careful not to make noise.

LIFTS THE KEYS, which JINGLE SLIGHTLY -

He CATCHES THEM with his other hand. Silencing them. Watches Albie carefully.

HE DOESN'T STIR.

CUT TO:

72 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, STAIRS TO CUPOLA - MOMENTS LATER 72

The SINGLE HANGING BULB comes on as Chuck FLIPS THE SWITCH. He stares up the wooden steps at the PAD-LOCKED DOOR of the Cupola. He stares for several seconds. And then...

MOUNTS THE STEPS. One at a time, slowly. They CREAK under his weight, and he winces, glancing back, making sure Albie isn't coming. The house is quiet.

He makes it to the YALE PAD-LOCK. Holds it in his hand.

And then, starts FLIPPING THROUGH ALBIE'S KEYS. Looking for the one that might fit.

It doesn't take long. Soon, he finds the SMALL KEY that matches the pad-lock.

He carefully PUTS IT IN, TURNING IT.

It's so quiet, we can hear EVERY LITTLE TUMBLER as it slowly turns -

AND THE PAD-LOCK POPS OPEN.

He carefully LIFTS IT off the hinge. THE DOOR IS UNLOCKED.

He reaches down, and TURNS THE KNOB.

It CLICKS in his hand.

Chuck TAKES A BREATH. THIS IS IT.

He TURNS THE KNOB. It makes a loud POP as the lock disengages. And he starts to PUSH THE DOOR OPEN.

He barely glimpses the TOTAL DARKNESS INSIDE... going SLOW... as the door CREAKS IN HIS HAND --

ALBIE (O.S.)
NO!

Chuck JUMPS at the sudden noise as Albie CHARGES UP THE STAIRS. BOOM BOOM BOOM on the wooden steps -

Chuck STUMBLES BACK as Albie GRABS HIM by the shirt --

-- HITTING THE DOOR, SWINGING IT OPEN --

BUT ALBIE YANKS HIM AWAY --

ALBIE (CONT'D)
GET AWAY FROM THERE --

CHUCK
Hey!

Chuck TRIPS at the top step as Albie SHOVES HIM ASIDE --

Chuck FALLS DOWN THE STEPS, HITTING THE WALL HARD --

LANDING ON THE STEPS, breaking his fall --

Looking up to see --

ALBIE STANDING AT THE DOORWAY. LOOKING INTO THE ROOM.

ALBIE FREEZES. CATCHING HIS BREATH. HIS EYES WIDENING.

Chuck lays on the steps, and from his vantage point, he can't see into the door. Only can see ALBIE framed against the darkness, staring inside.

WHATEVER ALBIE SEES - IT SCARES HIM. He blinks, slowly reaching up and --

TOUCHING HIS RIGHT ARM.

Chuck watches, confused...

And then Albie SNAPS OUT OF IT. Reaches out, PULLING THE DOOR SHUT. And THUNDERS DOWN THE STAIRS toward Chuck.

ALBIE
Give it to me. Give it to -

Chuck HANDS HIM the pad-lock. Albie THUMPS back up, and LOCKS THE DOOR AGAIN. Breathing heavy. Leans against it...

And looks down at Chuck. REALIZING WHAT HE'S DONE.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry... I'm sorry... you okay?

He heads down to help him up.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, just - you can't do that, you hear me? You can't.

CHUCK
What did you see?

Albie stares him down. Face pale.

ALBIE
You can't do that, Chuck. You can't do that. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

He TAKES HIS KEYS, holding them in his hand. Puts his hand on Chuck's shoulder, brushing off some dust from the fall. And then... PULLS HIM IN for a hug.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

They stand in the stairwell for a long, long time.

DISSOLVE TO:

73 EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - ANOTHER DAY 73

The kids file into the school building.

74 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS 74

The kids move through the halls. Chuck walks with his head down, in his own world. But he stops as he passes the BULLETIN BOARD by the office.

He BACKS UP, confirming what caught his eye:

Among the posters for Pep Club, Band, tryouts for the fall sports teams, there is a flier for **THE MATH LEAGUE.** But he's looking at the flier right next to it:

LEARN TO DANCE, above a picture of a boy and girl caught in mid-dance step. **JOIN TWIRLERS AND SPINNERS! IN TIME FOR FALL FLING! GET OUT ON THE FLOOR!**

He stares at it. And an image in his mind -

75 *INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - FLASHBACK* 75

CHUCK'S POV: Sarah twirling toward him, hand outstretched -

SARAH
Come on, little brother, let's dance.

CUT TO:

76 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - LATER THAT DAY 76

Chuck tentatively steps into the gym, where KIDS ARE LINED UP FOR THE TRYOUTS. There are THREE BOYS, and SEVEN GIRLS.

Moments later, MISS ROHRBACHER (40s and very athletic) paces in front of them like a drill sergeant.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Hello Twirlers, and hello spinners, whad'ya know - three boys this year, a new record. You gentlemen might find yourselves getting teased for your new hobby but I assure you, you are the smartest young men in the whole school. You'll soon see what I mean. For those of you who don't know me I'm Miss Rohrbacher, and when I'm not the girls' phys-ed teacher I'm what a few students have called "The Dance Monster." You have chosen what might be the best club this school's ever had, because if we didn't have girl's volleyball, we wouldn't have nothin'.

One of the boys is already trying to SNEAK to the door, having a change of heart. But Miss Rohrbacher doesn't miss a beat.

MISS ROHRBACHER (CONT'D)
No no no no no - back, Mr. Mulford. You are *mine* now.

77 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - ANOTHER DAY 77

Close on the BOOM BOX as Miss Rohrbacher pops in a tape.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Waltz.

"Serenade for Strings" plays. THE KIDS WALTZ clumsily... EXCEPT CHUCK.

NARRATOR
Chuck knew it.

78 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - ANOTHER DAY 78

ANOTHER TAPE into the boom box.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Cha-cha.

"Universo del Cha Cha Cha" plays. THEY MIMIC THE STEPS.

NARRATOR
Chuck knew it.

79 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - ANOTHER DAY 79

ANOTHER TAPE into the boom box.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Swing.

"Rock Cake" plays. They dance, but Chuck knows it.

NARRATOR
Chuck knew it.

80 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - ANOTHER DAY 80

ANOTHER TAPE pushed in.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Samba.

CHUCK
(beat)
Don't know that one.

She PRESSES PLAY. **"Samba Tropical"** fills the room.

Miss Rohrbacher lets her hips start, and then starts demonstrating the basic moves. A smile SPREADS ACROSS CHUCK'S FACE as he watches. He loves this dance immediately.

81 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - ANOTHER DAY 81

Chuck DANCES with one of the girls. His moves are almost flawless, hers are much more clumsy. Around them, the other students do their level best. And Miss Rohrbacher paces around them, watching. Her eyes especially drawn to Chuck.

82 QUICK CUTS show Chuck dancing with SEVERAL partners. 82

NARRATOR
He was by far the best dancer in the little club, so Miss Rohrbacher mostly put him with the girls who were clumsy. He understood she did it to make them better, and he was a good sport about it.

83 LATER Chuck links hands with another girl. An OLDER GIRL. 83
This is CAT McCOY (13).

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Near the end of their forty-five minutes, however, the Dance Monster would show mercy and pair him with Cat McCoy, who was an eighth grader and the best dancer of the girls.

They start to dance. And suddenly, it's much less boring.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Chuck didn't expect romance - Cat was not only gorgeous, she was a full foot taller than he was - but he loved to dance with her, and the feeling was mutual.

Cat and Chuck dance. She has to look down to make eye contact with him, but it's impressive nonetheless. And the other kids stop what they're doing to watch.

Miss Rohrbacher also watches them with different eyes than she watches the other students. Yes, when they dance together, it works. It works wonderfully.

84 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - ANOTHER DAY 84

The kids are paired up, going through a slightly more complicated waltz. Miss Rohrbacher paces around them until the song ends.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Okay okay, ten minutes freestyle!

She POPS ANOTHER TAPE into the boom box, and hits play.

"My Sharona" by the Knack fills the space. The kids GIGGLE, breaking apart and free styling. Miss Rohrbacher SLUMPS into her chair, glancing at some paperwork.

The kids all flail about, the formality and training giving way to silliness and improvisation. Chuck finds himself close to Cat, and gets a little brave.

CHUCK
Hey, watch this!

He SPINS on his heels - and does a very passable MOONWALK. The kids GASP. Off to the side, Miss Rohrbacher looks up from her work. Her MOUTH DROPS OPEN. Cat strides toward him.

CAT
Show me how you did that.

He does it again. She watches. She tries herself, but the illusion of walking backward just isn't quite there.

CHUCK
Kick off your shoes. Do it in your socks. Slide into it. Like this.

He demonstrates. Cat watches. Miss Rohrbacher GETS UP from her seat. Cat tries again... and it's BETTER. The kids CLAP. Miss Rohrbacher approaches.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Show me.

He does it again. She stands next to him, watching. And then, before long, SHE'S DOING IT TOO. For the first time in her life. The kids APPLAUD, and then EVERYBODY IS TRYING TO DO IT. The whole auditorium MOONWALKING LIKE CRAZY.

NARRATOR
Twirlers and Spinners let out half an hour later than usual that day.

85 EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - EVENING 85

Cat and Chuck walk together, heading away from the school and toward the football field.

CAT
That's so rad. You figured that out by yourself?

CHUCK
Just kept rewinding and rewinding 'til I figured it out.

CAT
We should do that at the Fling.

Chuck looks up at her.

CAT (CONT'D)
Not as a date or anything - I'm going out with Dougie Wentworth, you know that right?

CHUCK
Yeah.

CAT
But that doesn't mean we couldn't show them some cool moves. I really want to. Do you?

CHUCK
I don't know. I'm a lot shorter. I think people'll laugh.

CAT
Got you covered. My brother's got a pair of Cuban heels, I think they'd fit you. You've got big feet for a little kid.

CHUCK
Oh gee thanks a bunch.
(beat)
Definitely not a date *now*.

She laughs and gives him a sisterly hug as they walk. And he laughs too.

CUT TO:

86 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - ANOTHER DAY 86

Close on the CUBAN HEELS dropped in front of Chuck. He picks them up, checking them out. The heels are high, the toes pointed, and black as night. He looks up at her and SMILES.

MOMENTS LATER: he's wearing them, trying out a few moves. The whole class watches.

CAT
That totally works.

MISS ROHRBACHER
It totally does.

CHUCK
You sure?

MISS ROHRBACHER
Oh yeah, I'm sure.

CHUCK
They feel great - a little big.

87 MOMENTS LATER: Miss Rohrbacher and Cat are STUFFING TOILET PAPER INTO THE SHOES. 87

MISS ROHRBACHER
Try that.

He spins on his heels, struts. Nods and grins.

MISS ROHRBACHER (CONT'D)
Honey, let's give those a real spin.

Chuck tries out the shoes, freestyling to his own count as the kids look on.

CHUCK
Floor feels like ice!

Beside Miss Rohrbacher, another student - TIMMY - speaks up.

TIMMY
You put scratches on that floor, the janitors will beat your butt.

MISS ROHRBACHER
There won't be no scratches. He's too light on his feet to leave any.

CUT TO:

88 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, ALBIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT 88

Chuck sits across from his grandfather as Albie REVIEWS CHUCK'S MATH HOMEWORK. He chews on his pipe as he flips through the workbook. Chuck waits.

ALBIE
Almost perfect.

He CIRCLES TWO PROBLEMS, and hands it back to Chuck.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
Take another run at these two.

Chuck sighs, sitting back.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
Don't need to sigh. You're good at this, you know. You're really good at it.

CHUCK
Yeah but it's boring.

ALBIE
Boring? ... you mean *math?*

CHUCK
Yeah.

ALBIE
You know, I wonder if - maybe next semester - you wanna try Math League after school! I did it, all of High School in fact, and it was so great.

CHUCK
I'm doing Twirlers and Spinners.

ALBIE
Yeah.
(beat, hesitates)
Hey, put that down a second.

Chuck puts down his pencil.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
Just a little about math. Because people start out thinking it might be boring, and that's their first mistake. It's used in every career in every job in every facet of life on this planet, that's a fact. Hell, the *planet*! How do you think we figure out how long a day is?

CHUCK
Everybody knows how long a day is.

ALBIE
How long.

CHUCK
24 hours.

ALBIE
People say it's 24 hours but they're wrong.
(MORE)

ALBIE (CONT'D)
There are twenty-three hours and fifty-six minutes in a stellar day, plus a few odd seconds, math proves it. How do we know how old the Earth is? How old the universe is? How long people have been here? Or how to build a bridge, or a skyscraper, or how far apart the stars are? How did we land on the moon? The stars themselves - why they burn, why atoms split and fuse and all the rest - it's just math. *Stars* are just math. When you look at the night sky, you're seeing the biggest equation in the universe.

Albie smiles, leaning forward.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
Heck, your dancing - it's math too. I mean, what's the language of dance? How do you learn your steps? It's even in the name, I mean they call it "the count." One and two and three and four - what's a waltz? One-two-three, one-two-three... just numbers. Just math.

Chuck doesn't have a quippy comeback for this.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
And more than that, there's an art to it. What I do - all these files here, all these folders, these are all people's lives. Every choice they made, last year, last *ten* years, everything that's important to them, every weakness they have, every vice, every dream - it's all here, in *numbers*. Some schmuck takes those numbers, does the math without artistry, someone loses their house. *I* take those numbers, do a little art, and I save someone's life. That's what I do. That's what accounting *is*.

CHUCK
(beat)
Okay, yeah, I mean that's cool. But the *class* is boring, maybe they should teach *that*, the cool stuff, and not the boring stuff.

Albie considers what to say next. And we can tell, he's reluctant to say this next part. But he has to.

ALBIE
Math does something else, too. It helps you know the reality of the world. *Some* math, see, math that's called "statistics," or "probability" - it can tell you stuff about your future. It can tell you, for example, that you're more likely to get drafted by a major league sports team than to make a real living as a dancer.

Chuck's smile fades.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
The world *loves* dancers, it truly does - but it *needs* accountants. So there's much more demand, so there's much more opportunity. I know that might hurt, but that's the truth. *Math is truth*. It won't lie to you. It won't humor you. It doesn't factor in your preferences, it's *pure* that way.
(beat)
Math can do a lot of things, I mean math can be art - but it can't lie.

These words sear themselves into Chuck's mind.

ALBIE (CONT'D)
So take another run at those two. Because Chucko, my beautiful boy, you are good. You have art in you.

Albie goes back to his work. Chuck stares at him. And finally turns back to his math problems.

CUT TO:

89 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT 89

THE FALL FLING. The gymnasium is DECORATED for the dance, the lights dark, TWINKLING STRING LIGHTS hanging in a web above like a sky of stars. **"All Been Said Before" by Matt Nathanson** is playing.

The kids are in GOWNS and little SUITS, a dress rehearsal for later life. Among the several CHAPERONES are MISS ROHRBACHER and MISS RICHARDS, in their own formal wear.

MISS ROHRBACHER is in a SUIT, and several students POINT AND MURMUR about it. She doesn't seem to mind.

One of the other chaperones is FAMILIAR TO US. We've seen her face before, but when we saw her, she was a NURSE. A NURSE named **FELICIA.**

Chuck is ALONE. Leaning against the wall, watching the kids dance. He seems PENSIVE. A little STOIC. His mind WORKING.

He spots CAT dancing with her boyfriend, DOUGIE WENTWORTH (14). He's a TERRIBLE DANCER. Awkward and clumsy, he quickly TAPS OUT, pretending to spot someone.

Chuck watches as Doug walks away, leaving Cat alone on the dance floor.

Most of the kids aren't dancing. And as Doug joins his friends, Chuck frowns to see them MOCKING HIM. MIMICKING HIS BAD DANCING. Doug PUNCHES one of them on the shoulder.

As the song CHANGES (to **"Falling" by Blue Peter**), Chuck realizes CAT IS APPROACHING HIM.

CAT
Hey! You look great!

CHUCK
Thanks! You too!

CAT
Wanna show 'em how it's done?

Chuck flinches.

CHUCK
(long beat)
I dunno, I kinda hurt my leg.

CAT
You hurt your leg?

CHUCK
Yeah, I kinda - not too bad, I guess, I - I don't know. Maybe let's wait for a better song.

CAT
(beat)
This is a perfect song, c'mon! They're gonna lose their minds -

Chuck RESISTS.

CHUCK
The shoes. They kinda hurt tonight for some reason.

Cat looks at him, confused.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
I'll be right back. I gotta go to the bathroom and try to fix the shoes.

He walks away. Cat watches him go, concerned.

90 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER 90

Chuck looks at himself in the mirror. Runs the water in front of him, but just watches it go down the drain.

CUT TO:

91 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - LATER 91

Chuck POURS some punch into a cup. Watches the kids dancing to a SLOW SONG (**"All the Time" by We're About 9**). Sees Cat with Dougie, bored as they sway artlessly side to side.

Miss Rohrbacher approaches.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Hey kiddo!

CHUCK
Hey.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Thought you were gonna tear it up tonight?

CHUCK
I dunno. My shoes feel funny, I hurt my leg.

MISS ROHRBACHER
Oh you hurt your *leg*.

CHUCK
Yeah.

MISS ROHRBACHER
I'm sorry to hear that.

She leans beside him, looking out at the crowd.

MISS ROHRBACHER (CONT'D)
You came stag, huh?

CHUCK
Huh?

MISS ROHRBACHER
No date.

CHUCK
Nah.

MISS ROHRBACHER
That'll change. Believe me, that'll change. Give it a little time. None of this, none of *that* - out there - really means anything. This is all a scrimmage, just a practice. Game hasn't even started yet, for any of you.

The song SWITCHES to **"Rock n Roll Boogie"**. No more slow swaying, now it's a REAL NUMBER.

MISS ROHRBACHER (CONT'D)
Now we're talkin'.

Cat comes RUNNING OVER.

CAT
Hey! This is perfect, come on!

CHUCK
Nah, I'm still - my leg's still wonky.

CAT
(frustrated)
Chuck - come on! We're gonna blow the roof off!

CHUCK
Maybe later. Sorry, it really hurts.

Cat frowns. Turns, and goes walking back out to where her date is goofing around with his friends.

Miss Rohrbacher looks over at him knowingly.

MISS ROHRBACHER
You know I've been dancing since I was eight and I teach PE and I've seen when my kids get hurt, see how their walk changes, see how their posture changes, see those really tough ones who push through it. Impressive, what kids'll do. Grownups tap out, all the time, for a lot less but kids push through. Anyway, I know what a walk looks like with a hurt leg, is all I'm saying. And don't mind me saying, but you look - well, you look fine to me, Chuck.

He looks at her, flustered.

MISS ROHRBACHER (CONT'D)
(hands up)
Not saying you have to dance with the girl, that's up to you. Just saying, dance or no, you don't have to lie. Tell her the truth. She can take it.

She walks away. Chuck watches her go.

CUT TO:

92 EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - LATER THAT NIGHT 92

Chuck looks up at the STARS. Inside, we can hear the music. He stares at them with new eyes. Are they math, like Albie said? They're just... little points of light.

And as he watches - a STREAK across the sky. Just for a brief moment, and then gone. But he saw it.

He looks around, excited. But there's nobody else there to see it.

He keeps staring at the stars. And inside the gym, he hears the MUSIC CHANGE.

The music is distorted, distant - but we recognize the song.

Steve Winwood, singing "GIMME SOME LOVIN'".

Chuck looks back at the gymnasium. Thinking it over. Making up his mind.

CUT TO:

93 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MOMENTS LATER 93

Chuck walks in. The music is FULL in here, the song picking up. He heads for CAT, who looks bored out of her mind at one of the tables. But as he reaches her, holding out his hand, she SMILES. And she takes his hand as the lyrics start with -

SONG
Hey!

They walk out onto the floor.

SONG (CONT'D)
Well my temperature's rising and my feet on the floor -- crazy people knockin' cause they're wanting some more --

She KICKS OFF HER SHOES, dropping a few inches, and with his special shoes on, they're now EYE TO EYE. Across the way, Miss Rohrbacher looks up from a rowdy group of kids to see them on the floor.

SONG (CONT'D)
Let me in baby, I don't know what you got -- but you better take it easy, this place is hot --

Chuck looks at Cat. She looks at Chuck.

CAT
You ready?

CHUCK
Yeah.

THEY START DANCING.

SONG
And I'm - so glad we made it -- so glad we made it -- why won't you give me some lovin' -

And on the chorus, they break into a perfect DOUBLE MOONWALK.

SONG (CONT'D)
Gimme some lovin' - give give give give me some lovin - gimme some lovin' - every day --

The kids around them CHEER, spreading out. SURROUNDING THEM. And as they stick the landing on their DOUBLE MOONWALK -

THEY LET LOOSE. They dance like Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Gene Kelly, and Jennifer Beals all rolled into one.

SONG (CONT'D)
Hey -- well my head's all splinting and I'm floating to sound -- too much has happened 'cuz you're around -- it's been a hard day, I don't know what to do -- I'm gonna relax like everybody should --

The kids make a CIRCLE AROUND THEM and start CLAPPING WITH THE SONG. Miss Rohrbacher joins the circle, CLAPPING WITH THEM and shouting -

MISS ROHRBACHER
YES! GO GO GO GO GO!

Miss Richards is there too, clapping away. The whole gym turns their attention to Chuck and Cat. The song blasts on, and the kids dance for all they're worth.

Also watching, with his arm around Felicia, is MARTY ANDERSON. A big smile on his face.

SONG
... Now gimme some lovin' -- now gimme some lovin' -- gimme some lovin' --

They finish with cat spinning first one way, then the other, then collapsing backward into Chuck's arms with her own held out in a dying swan as Chuck goes down in a split. And two hundred kids CHEER when Cat turns her head -

AND PUTS A KISS ON THE CORNER OF CHUCK'S MOUTH.

In the circle, Cat's date frowns. Miss Rohrbacher beams. And the kids shout -

KIDS
One more time!!!

Chuck and Cat get to their feet, turning to the crowd. And shaking their heads "no."

NARRATOR
They may have been young, but they were smart enough to know when to quit. The best cannot be topped.

Chuck and Cat beam at each other. The kids keep clapping.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Six months before he died of a brain tumor, at the unfair age of thirty-nine, and while his mind was still working, mostly, Chuck told his wife the truth about the scar on the back of his hand.

CUT TO:

94 INT. CHUCK AND GINNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 94

Chuck (39) rubs his temples. He's noticeably PALER, than we saw him at the promenade, the dark circles under his eyes deeper and deeper.

As he rubs his temples, Ginny looks at the CRESCENT-SHAPED SCAR on his hand.

NARRATOR
When they'd first started dating, he told her he'd gotten it from a boy named Doug Wentworth, who was pissed about him dancing with his girlfriend at a middle school formal and pushed him into a chainlink fence outside the gym.

CHUCK
I lied about that, though.

Ginny smiles, undisturbed. Rubs his back, and helps apply an ice pack to the back of his neck.

GINNY
Oh my, a man of secrets, even still! What happened, love.

CUT TO:

95 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - CONTINUOUS 95

Cat RUNS from the dance floor to her friends, who shriek and hug her with a fervency of which only 13-year olds are capable. Chuck catches his breath.

CHUCK (V.O.)
When our fabulous dance was over I was sweaty and so hot my cheeks felt like they were gonna catch fire.
(MORE)

CHUCK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was also euphoric, and all I wanted in that moment was darkness, cool air, and to be by myself.

He walks past Miss Rohrbacher, past congratulatory students, and past DOUGIE and his friends - who IGNORE HIM.

96 EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT 96

CHUCK steps out onto the dark football field.

He looks up at the MILLIONS OF STARS in the night sky.

CHUCK (V.O.)
There were millions of stars that night, millions. And millions more behind them. Sure, maybe they were just math, but they also danced - I know 'cuz I saw one. Maybe there isn't a difference.

Chuck MOONWALKS across the field by himself, under the stars.

CHUCK (V.O.)
I remember thinking - the universe is large. It contains multitudes. But it also contains ME, and in this moment I am wonderful. I have a right to be wonderful.

Chuck DANCES freestyle up into the stands, to music only he can hear. Swinging, twirling, like no one is watching. And no one is. He twirls, arms outstretched, as if to embrace everything-

AND CATCHES HIS LEFT HAND on the chainlink fence.

He pulls it back. Looking down at it. There's a SMALL CUT, just filling with blood, a CRESCENT-SHAPED SLICE.

CUT TO:

97 INT. CHUCK AND GINNY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 97

Ginny wipes the sweat from his brow.

GINNY
Why lie about that, silly? I mean I get it if you told me how you beat the big bully to a pulp, but you never said that. You're a strange mystery, my dear.

Chuck smiles as his wife cares for him.

NARRATOR
He doesn't offer more. Because the scar was important for another reason - because it was part of a story he couldn't tell, even though there was now an apartment building standing on the site of the Victorian house where he had done most of his growing up.
(beat)
The HAUNTED Victorian house.

CHUCK
No reason. Funny thinking, I guess.

She lays her head on his shoulder. He kisses her hair, looking out past her. Out into the past.

NARRATOR
The scar meant more, so he had made it more. He just couldn't make it as much more as it really was. That made little sense, but as the glioblastoma continued its blitzkrieg, it was the best his disintegrating mind could manage.

He kisses her again, and now it's his turn to lay on her shoulder. She turns on the TV, and they settle in for the night.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
He had finally told her the truth of how the scar actually happened, and that would have to do.

CUT TO:

98 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, ALBIE'S OFFICE - ANOTHER NIGHT 98

Albie works at his desk. Going over his files, doing his math. He's finally done for the evening.

He stands, heading out, and turning off the light.

99 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 99

Albie walks through the living room, heading to the stairs, perhaps to head up to bed. But as he goes, he STUMBLES. He reaches out, CATCHING HIMSELF with one hand against the wall.

He stands there, CONFUSED. ALARMED. Touching his UPPER ARM. And then, an odd EXPRESSION CROSSES HIS FACE --

RELIEF.

NARRATOR
Chuck's grandpa, his Zaydee, died of a heart attack five years after the Fall Fling dance.

Close on a FRAMED PICTURE OF CHUCK (now 17) on the table. In the background, soft focus, we see Albie still STANDING, leaning against the wall.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Chuck was a junior in high school, singing in a band and dancing like Jagger during the instrumental breaks.

CUT TO:

100 INT. FUNERAL HOME, OFFICE - DAY 100

CHUCK (17 now) sits across the desk, looking at the strategically placed BOX OF KLEENEX in front of him.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR
He made all the arrangements himself. Came in a few weeks ago just to make sure everything was to the letter, which I thought was strange. Not many people bother to do that. Most people, they come here once to set it all up, they aren't anxious to come back again. Next time I see 'em, they're in their Sunday best, if you get me.

We recognize this voice. Chuck is sitting across from:

SAM YARBOROUGH. Owner and chief undertaker, Yarborough Funeral Home. The same kind face that smiled at Marty so long ago.

FUNERAL DIRECTOR/SAM
He was a great man and a good friend. He's been doing our books for twenty three years, and he saved our skin more than once when the taxman was coming.
(MORE)

FUNERAL DIRECTOR/SAM (CONT'D)
Anything I can do for Albie Krantz, anything at all, or for his family, you just say the word.

CHUCK
Do I owe you any money?

SAM
Not a penny. He took care of that too. Settled his tab that same visit. You know... the strangest thing... and this'll *sound* strange, so bear with me. See... I dreamed of being a television weatherman in my salad days, maybe even one of the networks, wasn't in the cards for me but I did spend a summer at WKNB - well there was a guy at KBN who they said could feel a storm comin' two solid weeks away without the radar. Had a sixth sense; damndest thing I ever saw. Used to make this face, this *face* when people'd talk about their travel plans, if he knew something they didn't. Not a smile, per se, no joy in it, just a *knowing*. "Weatherman Stare", I called it, and I didn't have it, not me, so I'm here, not there.
(beat)
Your granddad had that same face, when he was in here. Like he knew it was gonna rain, and I was just a guy selling him an umbrella. "Weatherman Stare", I'm sure of it. Strangest thing...

Chuck nods. That doesn't sound crazy at all.

CUT TO:

101 EXT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE - DAY 101

Chuck gets out of the driver's side of his BEAT UP CAR, carrying his backpack from school as he arrives home.

NARRATOR
Albie left him everything. More than enough to pay for his college education, and later on, the sale of the Victorian paid for the house he and Ginny moved into after their honeymoon in the Catskills.

102 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - ANOTHER DAY 102

Chuck is COOKING, just like Sarah used to. Holding the landline phone to his ear as he tries to get dinner done.

NARRATOR
He flatly refused to move to Omaha to live with his mother's parents.

CHUCK
(into the phone)
I love you guys -

NARRATOR
- he said -

CHUCK
- but this is where I grew up and where I want to stay til college. I'm seventeen, I'm not a baby.

103 EXT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY 103

Chuck steps onto the porch as his OTHER GRANDPARENTS exit their car, suitcases in hand. He sighs, and then goes for the hug. Helps them with their bags.

NARRATOR
So they, both long retired, came to him and stayed in the Victorian for the twenty-odd months before Chuck went off to the University of Illinois.

CUT TO:

104 EXT. CEMETERY - ANOTHER DAY 104

Chuck is at his grandfather's FUNERAL. Much like his grandmothers, just a few onlookers, friends and family. Standing by, in his suit, is Sam Yarborough.

NARRATOR
They weren't able to be there for the funeral, however. It happened fast, as Albie had wanted, and his mom's folks had loose ends to tie up in Omaha. Chuck didn't really miss them, if he was honest. His Zaydee hated a fuss, almost as much as he hated a crowd.

CUT TO:

105 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - ANOTHER DAY 105

Chuck sits at the table, holding a LARGE MANILA ENVELOPE. Turning it over and over in his hands.

NARRATOR
A day before they were scheduled to arrive, Chuck finally opened the envelope that had been sitting on the table in the front hall. It was from Sam Yarborough, owner and chief undertaker at Yarborough Funeral Home and inside were Albie Krantz's personal effects - at least those that had been in his pockets when he collapsed.

Chuck DUMPS the envelope out. A rattle of coins, a few cough drops, a pocket knife. A new-ish cell phone. His wallet.

Chuck sighs. Picks up the wallet, smells the old leather, and starts to CRY a little.

His eyes go to the **KEY RING**. He stares at it. And lets out a long sigh.

IT'S TIME.

He picks up the keys.

CUT TO:

106 INT. KRANTZ'S HOUSE, STAIRS TO CUPOLA - MOMENTS LATER 106

Chuck turns the corner, turning on the SINGLE HANGING BULB at the top of the narrow stairs. He slowly climbs the stairs, eyes on the PAD LOCK.

He reaches the door and hesitates. And finally, starts turning the key ring over until the sees the right key.

He puts it in the lock, and it OPENS.

Chuck takes a deep breath. All those childhood fears are there, but something else too - anticipation.

He pulls the lock. And he OPENS THE DOOR.

107 INT. THE CUPOLA - CONTINUOUS 107

The door creaks open. Chuck stares inside.

There is NOTHING. THE ROOM IS EMPTY.

It is a small room, circular, no more than fourteen feet in diameter. On the far side is a single wide window, caked with dirt of years. Though the day is sunny, the light it lets in is bleary and diffuse.

Chuck puts out a foot onto the boards, like someone testing the water of a pool. There is no creak, no give.

He tentatively steps in, watching his feet. Looking for any creak, any sag from the supposedly “rotten” floor.

The floor is perfectly solid.

He slowly WALKS TO THE WINDOW. Leaving FOOTPRINTS in the thick dust.

He makes it to the glass, and looks out.

He’s disappointed.

The view isn’t much. He can see the shopping center beyond the greenbelt, and beyond that, a train moving toward the city, pulling a string of cars.

Nothing special. Grandpa had been telling the truth about that.

He stands at the window for a spell, and finally turns around. Follows his own footprints back to the door.

He steps through, grasping the doorknob. Goes to shut the door, looking up once more into the room before he goes -

AND STOPS COLD.

We have barely become aware of the faint NOISE in the room -

- a barely audible BIP. BIP. BIP.

In the center of the room is now a HOSPITAL BED.

There is a man laying in it, he appears to be unconscious. We recognize him immediately, though.

From the **CRESCENT-SHAPED SCAR** on his left hand.

Chuck stares at the scar, unsurprised to see it.

There is a table beside the bed. On the table are various lotions and a pair of BLACK-RIMMED GLASSES.

Chuck takes in a breath. Stares. The soft BIP BIP BIP of the phantom heart monitor fills the room.

Chuck NODS to himself, sighing.

NARRATOR
In this room, Chuck's grandpa had seen the Jefferies boy, body broken by the car. He'd seen Henry Petersen, hanging from the ceiling. He'd seen his own wife lying dead.

Tears form in Chuck's eyes.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
And likely, Chuck supposed, perhaps the night Chuck had stolen his keys... Albie had even seen himself, crumpled to the floor, still clutching his upper arm.
(beat)
"It's the waiting," he'd said. "That's the hard part."

Chuck stares at the man in the bed.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Now, Chuck's own waiting would begin. How long would that wait be? Exactly how old was the man in the hospital bed?

Chuck STEPS FORWARD to get a closer look -- but suddenly, the MAN IS GONE.

Chuck BLINKS. THE ROOM IS EMPTY. Nothing at all inside but his footprints in the dust.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
There was a final bip -

BIP -

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
- from the unseen monitor and then that was gone too. The man did not fade, as ghostly apparitions did in the movies, he was just gone, insisting he had never been there in the first place.

Chuck EXHALES. Staring at the empty space where the vision just was.

CHUCK
He wasn't -

NARRATOR
- Chuck thinks -

CHUCK
- and I will insist he wasn't, and I will live my life until my life runs out. I am wonderful, I deserve to be wonderful... *and I contain multitudes.*

Chuck stares at the empty room, and finally turns away from it. Heads to the door. He closes it softly behind him.

We stay in the dusty room, looking at the footprints in the dust - leading from the door to the window, and back again.

And we hear the PAD LOCK snap shut outside, and the footfalls on the stairs receding as Chuck Krantz goes on to live all the wonderful days of his life.

Then it is silent.

FADE TO BLACK.